

DOORWAY TO HELL by FRANK PATTON

fantastic

ADVENTURES

**WAR
ON
VENUS**
by EDGAR RICE
BURROUGHS

MARCH
20c

The
FANTASTIC TWINS
by JOHN YORK CABOT



AT THE FIRST SIGN OF A
COLD OR SORE THROAT

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-QUICK!**



In clinical tests over a 10-year period, Listerine users had fewer colds and milder colds than non-users.

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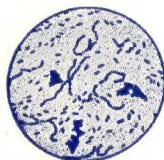
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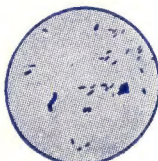
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BEFORE



AFTER

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Dept. 2BM, National Radio Institute
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ADVENTURES

TRADE MARK REGISTERED

**VOL. 4
NO. 3**

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Front cover painting by J. Allen St. John, featuring an action scene based on "War On Venus." Illustrations by J. Allen St. John; Virgil Finlay; Robert Fuqua; Rod Ruth.

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**FANTASTIC
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MARCH,
1942**

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**VOLUME 4,
NUMBER 3**



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ENDURED WITH THE
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WHENCE came the knowledge that built the Pyramids and the mighty Temples of the Pharaohs? Civilization began in the Nile Valley centuries ago. Where did its first builders acquire their astounding wisdom that started man on his upward climb? Beginning with naught they overcame nature's forces and gave the world its first sciences and arts. Did their knowledge come from a race now submerged beneath the sea, or were they touched with Infinite inspiration? From what concealed source came the wisdom that produced such characters as Amenhotep IV, Leonardo da Vinci, Isaac Newton, and a host of others? Today it is known that they discovered and learned to interpret certain *Secret Methods* for the development of their inner power of mind. They learned to command the inner forces within their own beings, and to master life. This secret art of living has been preserved and handed down throughout the ages. Today it is extended to those who dare to use its profound principles to meet and solve the problems of life in these complex times.



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The Editor's Notebook

A CONFIDENTIAL CHAT WITH THE EDITOR

THERE have been many stories written about insane scientists, dictators, and the like. We regard these fantasies in a rather calm light. But recently things have happened to us that we can call truly fantastic, and yet which can't be regarded in any measure of calmness. We refer to the cowardly treachery of the Jap attack on Hawaii.

OUR purpose in mentioning it is not out of indignation. The indignation is all over now, and is replaced with scorn, and perhaps a little pity. What we want to point out is an incredible fantasy of the future that we fear will again come true as it has in the past.

IN OUR opinion, the Jap attack on Hawaii has no chance for military success. The reason behind it is one of strict *fear*! Not conquest, but fear. It is the desperate act of a clique of governmental leaders who have gone beyond their depth, have ruined their country, and merited the vengeance of their own people. Thus, to avoid the

hamstringing that should, and would, be justly theirs, they have attacked giant America. Yes, we shall beat them. They know it. But their people will know only that it is America who has beaten them, and not their own incompetent leaders. They will curse America, they will *not* kill their guilty leaders. And we, making that incredible fantasy we just mentioned once more a reality, will in our stupid kind-hearted mis-justice, *exile* those guilty leaders to a magnificent castle, to putter around in perfect happiness and contentment for the rest of their natural lives.

PERHAPS the fantastic conception of a world court, for the trial, conviction, and execution of these murderers after the war is over is only a dream in our pages of fiction. Only a crackpot conception of a fiction writer. But perhaps we of America will be able to see the difference between fantasy and common sense when we've read the final chapter of this particular page of history. Perhaps!

THIS issue brings the final story in Edgar Rice Burroughs' latest series of Carson of Venus. We hope you liked these stories from the pen of the master, and if you did, we refer you to the current series of the Inner World, Pellucidar, now running in AMAZING STORIES.

WE present also the final instalment of "Doorway To Hell," from the pen of new-writer Frank Patton. The author's conception of that well-known, or should we say "unknown" place is quite a surprise to us. But whatever it is, we are staying away from strange bronze doors in banks. Not that we haven't *been* staying away from them!

ROSS ROCKLYNNE'S story in this issue is his first for us in quite a long time, and we say: "Welcome back, Ross. It's nice to have you with us again."

INCIDENTLY, his return also marks the appearance in our pages of a favorite illustrator of yours. Virgil Finlay did the art work for this story, and a peach of a job too. We'll have him back very often from now on. We've got one scheduled for the next issue of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES illustrating a story by Robert Moore Williams about a very very strange gangster indeed.

(Concluded on page 144)



"For ten years we shot test rockets to Mars
—then one day they sent them all back"

ADVERTISEMENT

DO THE DEAD RETURN?

A strange man in Los Angeles, known as "The Voice of Two Worlds," tells of astonishing experiences in far-off and mysterious Tibet, often called the land of miracles by the few travelers permitted to visit it. Here he lived among the lamas, mystic priests of the temple. "In your previous lifetime," a very old lama told him, "you lived here, a lama in this temple. You and I were boys together. I lived on, but you died in youth, and were reborn in England. I have been expecting your return."

The young Englishman was amazed as he looked around the temple where he was believed to have lived and died. It seemed uncannily familiar, he appeared to know every nook and corner of it, yet—at least in this lifetime—he had never been there before. And mysterious was the set of circumstances that had brought him. Could it be a case of reincarnation, that strange belief of the East that souls return to earth again and again, living many lifetimes?

Because of their belief that he had formerly been a lama in the temple, the lamas welcomed the young man with open arms and taught him rare mysteries and long-hidden practices, closely guarded for three thousand years by the sages, which have enabled many to perform amazing feats. He says that the system often leads to almost unbelievable improvement in power of mind, can be used to achieve brilliant business and professional success as well as great happiness. The young man himself later became a noted explorer and geographer, a successful publisher of maps



and atlases of the Far East, used throughout the world.

"There is in all men a sleeping giant of mindpower," he says. "When awakened, it can make man capable of surprising feats, from the prolonging of youth to success in many other worthy endeavors." The system is said by many to promote improvement in health; others tell of increased bodily strength, courage and poise.

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War On Venus

by Edgar Rice Burroughs

WHEN Duare, Ero Shan, and I escaped from Voo-ad in the anotar we flew directly south, for there I believed lay Korva, the empire ruled by my friend Taman.

How far away lay Sanara, the Korvan seaport which Taman had made capital of the empire since the overthrow of the Zani revolutionists, we had no idea.

Duare had flown a considerable distance in this direction while preparing to effect the escape of Ero Shan and myself from Voo-ad, and she had told me that farther progress south had seemed effectually blocked by forests of tremendous height and a great mountain range, the tops of both of which were eternally hidden in the innermost of the two great cloud envelopes which surround Venus, protecting her from the terrific heat of the sun.

I would have been glad to have returned Ero Shan to his native city of Havatoo, had Duare's safety not been my first and almost only consideration.

Ero Shan and I had discussed the matter and he had been most insistent that we fly directly to Sanara and thus ensure the safety of Duare before giving any thought to his return to Havatoo; but I had assured him that once there, I would assist him in building another anotar in which he could return home.

After we reached the mountains I turned east, searching for a break in them where I might continue our southward journey, for it would have been suicidal to attempt to fly blind through

the lower cloud envelope without the slightest knowledge of the height to which the mountain range rose. The lower cloud envelope does not always maintain the same altitude, but seems to billow upward and downward sometimes as much as five thousand feet; and it was at one of those times that it was at its highest that I discerned the summits of some relatively low peaks beyond which there seemed to be open country.**

"Well," said Duare, with a sigh of relief, as the vast plain opened out below us, "we got through, and that augers well, I think, for the future; but this doesn't look much like the country surrounding Sanara, does it?"

"It doesn't look at all like it," I replied, "and as far as I can see there is no sign of an ocean."

"It may not look like Korva," said Ero Shan, "but it is certainly a beautiful country."

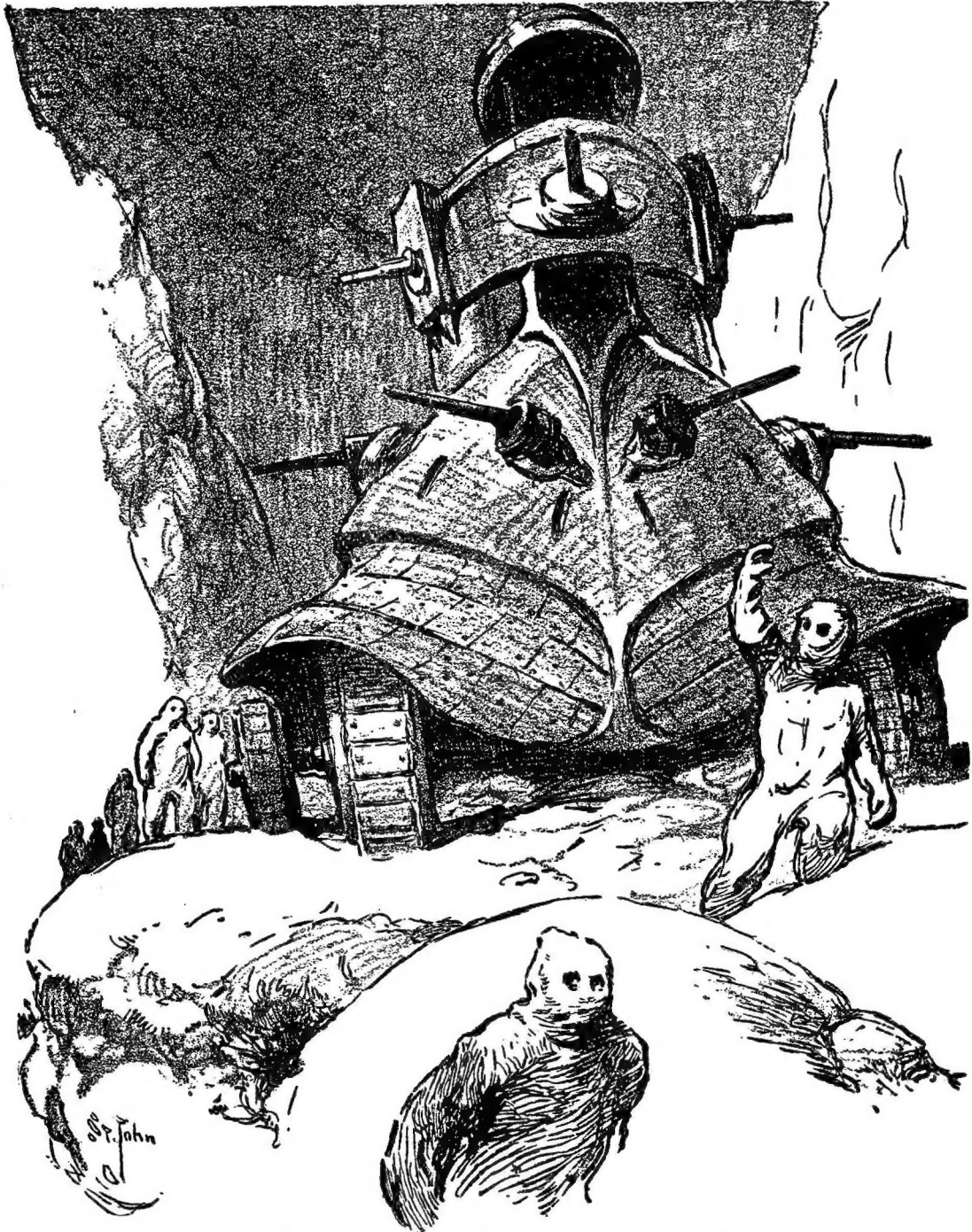
And indeed it was. As far as the eye could reach in every direction the plain was almost level, with only a few low, scattered hills and forests and rivers breaking the monotony of its vast, pastel-shaded expanse. Was this Anlap?*

"Look," said Duare, "there is something moving down there."

Far ahead I could see what appeared to be a procession of little dots, moving slowly parallel with a great river. "It might be game," said Ero Shan, "and we could use some meat."

Whatever they were, they were moving with such exact military precision that I doubted very much that it was

What could a lone Earthman do to destroy
the tremendous land battleships of Venus?



Although they operated on land, these giant ships fought like an Earth navy

game; however, I decided to fly over them, drop down, and investigate. As we came closer and could see them better they resolved themselves into the most amazing things that any of us ever had seen. There were about twenty enormous man-made things crawling over the plain. In front of them, on their flanks, and bringing up the rear, were a number of smaller replicas of the leviathans.

"What in the world are they?" demanded Duare.

"The whole thing looks to me like a battle fleet on land," I replied. "It's the most amazing sight I have ever seen; and I am going to drop down and have a closer look at it."

"Be careful," cautioned Duare. "Don't forget that thing you call a jinx, which you say has been 'camping on our trail' for so long."

"I know you are perfectly right, my dear," I replied, "and I won't go too close, but I'd like to see just what those things are."

I circled above that Brobdingnagian caravan and dropped down to about a thousand feet above it; and this closer view revealed that its individual units were far more amazing and extraordinary than they had appeared at a distance. The largest units were between seven hundred and eight hundred feet long, with a beam of over a hundred feet; and they rose to a height of at

least thirty feet above the ground, with lighter superstructures rising another thirty feet or more above what I am constrained to call the upper decks, as they resembled nothing so much as dreadnaughts. Flags and pennons flew from their superstructures and from their bows and sterns; and they fairly bristled with armament.

The smaller units were of different design and might be compared to cruisers and destroyers, while the big ones were certainly land dreadnaughts, or, I might say super-dreadnaughts. The upper decks and the superstructures were crowded with men looking up at us. They watched us for a moment and then suddenly disappeared below decks; and I realized instantly that they had been called to their stations.

That didn't look good to me and I started to climb to get away from there as quickly as possible; and simultaneously I heard the humming of t-ray guns. They were firing at us with that deadly Amtorian t-ray which destroys all matter.

With throttle wide I climbed, zig-zagging in an attempt to avoid their fire, upbraiding myself for being such a stupid fool as to have taken this unnecessary chance; and then a moment later, as I was congratulating myself upon having made good our escape, the nose of the anotar disappeared, together with the propeller.

"The jinx is still with us," said Duare.

AS I came down in a long glide the firing ceased and a couple of the smaller units detached themselves from the column and came slithering across the plain toward us at terrific speed. They were right there when we landed and their guns were trained on us. I stood up in the cockpit and raised

* Anlap is a considerable land mass lying in the southern hemisphere of Venus. A portion of it lies in the south temperate zone, but it extends toward the north far into Strabol, the torrid zone. Practically all of this part of Anlap is totally unexplored and uncharted, its northern boundary being indicated on Amtorian maps by dotted lines.—Ed.

** Anlap is roughly divided into three parts by this mountain range and another one much farther to the south. Both of these mighty ranges run in an east-west direction and between them is an enormous, well-watered plateau, comprising vast plains of almost level land.—Ed.

my hands in sign of peace. A door in the side of the contraption opened and six men dropped to the ground and came toward us. All but one were armed with r-ray pistols and rifles; the exception, who led them, evidently being an officer. Their costumes consisted of loincloths, sandals, and helmets, the helmets being the only unusual departure from the almost universal Amtorian costume of men. They were a rather grim-looking lot, with square jaws and set, unsmiling faces. They were rather handsome in a sinister sort of way. They came and stopped beside the anotar, looking up at us.

"Get down," said the officer.

Ero Shan and I dropped to the ground, and I helped Duare down. "Why did you shoot us down?" I demanded.

"Perhaps Danlot the lotokor will tell you," replied the officer, "I am taking you to him."

They herded us into the belly of the strange craft from which they had come. There must have been between two and three hundred men aboard this three hundred foot neolantar, as I later learned they called it. On this lower deck were the sleeping quarters, galley and mess rooms, as well as room for the storage of provisions and ammunition. On the next deck were batteries of guns that fired through ports on both sides and at the blunt and rounded bow and stern. The upper deck to which we were finally taken was also heavily armed, having guns in revolving turrets forward and aft, lighter guns on top of the turrets, and batteries forward and aft, over which the turret guns could fire. The superstructure rose from the center of this upper deck. The upper deck of the superstructure was what, I suppose, one might call the bridge, while below that were the cabins of the officers.

All these ships are called lantars, which is a contraction of the two words "lap" and "notar," lap meaning land and notar meaning ship. The big dreadnaught is called a tonglantar, or big land ship; the cruiser a kolantar, or fast land ship; the destroyer a neolantar, or small land ship. I call them superdreadnaughts, cruisers and destroyers because these are what they most resemble in our sea-going navies on earth.

WE were taken to one of the superdreadnaughts, which proved to be the flagship of the fleet. This craft was simply tremendous, being seven hundred and fifty feet long with a hundred and sixteen foot beam. The upper deck was thirty feet above the ground and the superstructure rose thirty feet above that. It was dressed with ensigns, banners and pennons, but otherwise it was a very grim and efficient-looking fighting machine. Forward, on the upper deck, was a group of officers; and to these we were escorted.

Danlot, the lotokor who commanded the fleet, was a hard-bitten, stern-looking man. "Who are you, and what were you doing coming over the fleet of Falsa in that thing?" he demanded. He was scrutinizing us almost intently and suspiciously as he spoke.

"We have been lost for many months," I said, "and we were trying to find our way home."

"Where is that?" he asked.

"Korva," I replied.

"Never heard of it," said Danlot. "Where is it?"

"I am not quite sure myself," I replied; "but it is somewhere south of here, on the southern coast of Anlap."

"This is Anlap," he said; "but the sea is to the east, and there is no Korva there. To the south are mountains that cannot be crossed. What is that thing

you were flying through the air in; and what makes it stay up?"

"It is an anotar," I said; and then I explained the principle of it to him briefly.

"Who built it?" he asked.

"I did."

"Where have you just flown from?"

"From a city called Voo-ad, north of the mountains," I replied.

"Never heard of it," said Danlot.

"You have been lying to me and you are a poor liar. You say you are coming from a place that no one ever heard of and going to a place that no one ever heard of. Do you expect me to believe that? I'll tell you what you are—you are Pangan spies, all of you." At that I laughed. "What are you laughing at?" he demanded.

"Because your statement is absolutely ridiculous on the face of it," I replied. "If we had been spies, we would never have come down to be shot at."

"The Pangans are all fools," snapped Danlot.

"I might agree with you that I am a fool," I said, "but I am no Pangan. I never even heard of a Pangan before. I have no idea what country I am in now."

"I still say that you are spies," he insisted, "and as such you will be destroyed."

"My mate," I said, indicating Duare, "was formerly the janjong of Vapaja; and my friend Ero Shan is a soldier-biologist of Havatoo; and I am Carson of Venus, a tanjong of Korva. If you are civilized people, you will treat us as befits our rank."

"I have heard of Havatoo," said Danlot. "It lies over three thousand miles east of here, across the ocean. Many years ago a ship was wrecked on the Falsa coast. It was a ship from a land called Thora; and on board it was a man from Havatoo, who was a

prisoner of the Thorists. These Thorists were a bad lot and we killed them all, but the man from Havatoo was a very learned man. He still lives with us in Onar. Perhaps I shall let you live until we return to Onar."

"What was the name of this man from Havatoo?" asked Ero Shan.

"Korgan Kantum Ambat," replied Danlot.

"I knew him well," said Ero Shan.

"He disappeared mysteriously many years ago. He was a very learned man; a soldier-physicist."

"He told me that he fell off the quay into the river one night," said Danlot, "was swept over the falls below the city and miraculously escaped with his life. He managed to climb onto a floating log below the falls, and was carried down to the ocean, where he was captured by the Thorist ship. As there was no way in which he could return to Havatoo, he has remained here."

AFTER this Danlot's attitude toward us softened. He told me that they were on their way to the Pangan city of Hor. He didn't like the idea of taking us into battle with him; he said we would be in the way, especially Duare.

"If I could spare a ship," he said, "I would send you back to Onar. There are absolutely no quarters for women on these lantars."

"I can double up with my klookor," said the officer who had brought us, "and the woman may have my cabin." A klookor is a lieutenant.

"Very good, Vantor," said Danlot; "you may take the woman back with you."

I did not like that and I said so, but Vantor said there was no room for me aboard his ship and Danlot cut me short peremptorily, reminding me that we were prisoners. I saw the shadow

of a sarcastic smile curl Vantor's lips as he led Duare away, and I was filled with foreboding as I saw her leave the flagship and enter the destroyer. Immediately after this the fleet got under way again.

Danlot quartered me with a young sub-lieutenant or rokor, and Ero Shan with another, with the understanding that we would have to sleep while these men were on duty, and give up the cabins to them when they returned to their quarters. Otherwise we had the run of the ship, and I was rather surprised at that, but it convinced me that Danlot no longer felt that we were Pang-spies.

About an hour after we got under way I saw something dead ahead coming across the plain toward us at a terrific rate of speed, and when it got closer I saw that it was a diminutive lantar. It came alongside the flagship, which was still moving forward and did not diminish its speed, and an officer came aboard from it and went immediately to Danlot; and almost immediately thereafter the flags and pennons on all the ships were struck, with the exception of the ensign and an additional flag was raised below the ensign on the staff which topped the superstructure. It was a red flag, with crossed swords in black—the battle flag of Falsa. Now the fleet fanned out, with destroyers in three lines far ahead, followed by three lines of cruisers, and the battleships in rear at the apex of the triangle. From the front and either flank little scout ships came racing in and took their positions on either side of the ships to which they were attached.

The men of the flagship were all at their stations. The great fleet moved steadily forward in perfect formation. It was battle formation all right and I knew that a battle must be impending,

but I could see no enemy; and as no one was paying any attention to me, I went up to the bridge to get a better view of what was going on and to see if I could locate an enemy. There were officers and signalmen there, sending and receiving messages. There were four t-ray guns mounted on the bridge, each with its complement of three gunners; so that the bridge, while large, was pretty well crowded, and certainly no place for a sightseer, and I was surprised that they permitted me to remain; but I later learned that it was on Danlot's orders that I was given free run of the ship, on the theory that if I were a spy, I would eventually convict myself by some overt act.

"Have you ever been in a battle between lantar fleets?" one of the officers asked me.

"No," I replied. "I never saw a lantar until today."

"If I were you, then, I'd go below," he said. "This is the most dangerous place on the ship. In all probability more than half of us will be killed before the battle is over."

As he ceased speaking I heard a whistling sound that rose to a long drawn out shriek and ended in a terrific detonation, as a bomb exploded a couple of hundred yards ahead of the flagship.

Instantly the big guns of the battleship spoke in unison.

The battle was on.

THE very largest guns of the battleship hurl shells weighing a thousand pounds to a distance of about fifteen miles, while smaller bore guns hurl five hundred pound shells from twenty to twenty-five miles. These guns are used when the enemy is below the horizon, as the t-ray and the r-ray describe no curve in their flight. Moving as they do, always in a straight line, the target

must be visible to the gunner.

The leading destroyers and cruisers were now out of sight, bearing down on the enemy to get their terribly destructive t-ray guns into action. Enemy shells were bursting all about us; and our battleships were firing salvo after salvo.

Presently the battleships leaped forward at accelerated speed, rolling and bumping over the uneven ground so that the sensation was much the same as being on the deck of an ocean-going ship in a heavy sea; yet the firing never ceased.

I saw a direct hit on the superstructure of the next ship in line. Every man on the bridge of that ship must have been killed instantly. Though it seemed to me like a man without eyes, it kept its place in line and continued firing; its commander and his staff operating it from an armored control room in the bowels of the ship from radio instructions received from the flagship. While handicapped, it was still able to fight.

"You see what I meant," said the officer who had advised me to go below, nodding in the direction of the wreck of the superstructure.

"I see," I said, "but it is far more interesting here than it would be below."

"You will find it still more interesting when we close with the enemy," he said.

We could now see our cruisers and some of the destroyers ahead. They were closely engaged with enemy craft and at last we saw the big battleships of the enemy coming up over the curve of the planet; and in another half hour we were in the thick of it. The little scout ships were buzzing around like mesquitos, and they and the destroyers were launching wheeled torpedos at the enemy ships, while enemy ships of the

same classes were attacking us similarly.

The booming of the big guns had given place to the hissing of t-rays, which are capable of destroying nearly all forms of matter.

These ships have two forms of protection, heavy armorplate against shells, over which lies a thin protective coating which is impervious to t-rays, but which can be dissolved by a certain chemical. And now that the two fleets were in close contact, another form of gun was brought into action, which fired shells containing this acid, and when a direct hit was made you could see a great blotch on the side of the hit ship where the t-ray protective material had been dissolved, and the armorplate beneath was exposed. Immediately the ship was vulnerable to t-rays on this spot and the t-ray guns of opposing ships were at once trained on it; and it became the strategy of such a ship to continually maneuver so that this vulnerable spot was not presented to the enemy.

AS WE approached the vortex of the battle I discovered that one of its most interesting phases centered about the little wheeled torpedos. Mounted on a tricycle undercarriage, they are self-propelling, and are supposed to move in a straight line toward the target at which they are aimed when they are launched, thus naturally a rough terrain will deflect them; and they are really highly effective only at very close range. Their purpose is to disable the heavy, endless belts upon which the lantars run after the manner of our caterpillar tractors and tanks.

One of the functions of the little scout ships is to destroy enemy torpedos as well as to launch their own; and this they do with small t-ray guns. To me, these would be the most inter-

esting ships to command. They are amazingly fast and maneuverable and the busiest things I ever saw, darting in to launch a torpedo, zigzagging out again at terrific speed to avoid t-ray fire, or chasing an enemy torpedo to put it out of commission.

The flagship was in the thick of the battle now, and I soon found more interesting things than the little scout ships close at hand, for we were engaged in a duel with the men on the superstructure of an enemy warship close off our starboard side.

Six of our men were already dead and one of our guns had been put out of action. A chemical shell had hit its shield, removing the protective coating and exposing it to the deadly t-ray fire of the enemy.

The t-rays opened a big hole in it, and the gunners dropped one by one.

Two men were dragging another shield to the gun and I gave them a hand. We held it in front of us to protect us from enemy fire, but in getting it into position my companions exposed themselves, and both were killed.

I looked around to see if someone was coming to command the gun, but I found that everyone else on the bridge had been killed, with the exception of the crews of the other guns, one of which was now being fired by the only remaining officer. So I took my place on the seat at the gun's breech and glued my eye to the little periscope which barely topped the shield. I was entirely protected from everything but shellfire until another chemical shell should strike my shield.

THROUGH the periscope I could plainly see the bridge of the enemy ship, and I could see that they were not much better off than we. The deck was littered with dead, and it was evident that two of their guns were out of

commission. Below me the two ships were hurling broadsides of chemical shells and t-rays into one another's hulls. There was a gaping hole in the side of the enemy ship, but our t-rays had not yet reached a vital spot.

Now I turned the periscope back on the enemy bridge and saw a foot protruding beneath the shield of the gun directly opposite me. I set my sights on the foot and blew it off. I heard the fellow scream and then I saw him roll to the deck. He should have held onto himself better, for now his head was exposed, and a couple of seconds later that followed his foot. The gun, however, kept on firing. There might be two more gunners behind that shield.

The t-ray travels in a straight path, not much greater in diameter than an ordinary lead pencil. The two bursts that I had fired from the gun had convinced me that it was an extremely accurate weapon. Naturally, the rolling and the bumping of the two ships as they forged along side by side made almost any hit more or less of an accident. No matter how much a ship rolls, there is an instant at each end of its roll when it is static, and it was at this instant that I had fired my two bursts.

Now I determined to try for another lucky shot, and sought to train my gun on the tiny opening in the muzzle of the enemy gun that was facing me. If I could strike that tiny target, the gun would be permanently disabled. Following that little target with my sight was nerve-racking.

I fired a dozen bursts without accomplishing anything and then for a fraction of a second the two ships seemed to stand perfectly still simultaneously. My sight was directly on the opening in the muzzle of the enemy gun as I pressed the button which liberates the t-ray. I could see the gun quiver as the

t-rays bored completely through it, and I knew that I had made a direct hit and that that gun would fire no more.

Only one gun was now in action on the enemy bridge, and I could see two of its gunners lying dead outside the shield; so I was pretty sure that it was manned by only one man and that the surviving gunner or gunners of the piece I had hit would try to reach the remaining gun and reinforce its crew; so I turned my piece on the space between the two guns and waited. Sure enough, both gunners started to dart across simultaneously and I got them both.

Looking around for new worlds to conquer, I turned my periscope on other parts of the enemy battleship. It had taken a terrific beating, but most of its guns were still in action. I saw a point, very low down on the hull, where a chemical shell had burst. It was on the armored apron that protects the running gear.

I turned my piece on that spot and pressed the button. It was impossible to hold it there constantly because of the movement of the two ships, but I had the satisfaction of seeing a hole appear in the armor; and I kept on plugging away at it until there was a hole there as big as a man's head, exposing the great metal track upon which the monster traveled. The track was moving so fast that the t-rays were spread over a considerable surface, with the result that no immediate effects were observable; but presently I saw the tracks crumple beneath the giant wheels, and jam.

Instantly the battleship swung toward us with the blocking of its wheels on the port side, while the starboard side was still in motion. We veered away at full speed just in time to avoid a collision; and then, as the enemy ship came to a stop, we left

her to the mercy of the destroyers and scout ships that swarmed around her like hyenas and jackals.

FOR the first time since I had manned the gun I had an opportunity to look about me and I saw that the enemy fleet was in full flight, with our destroyers and cruisers harassing it. Astern as far as eye could see the plain was dotted with disabled ships of both sides, and I could see hand to hand fighting on the ground as the Falsans sought to take prisoners.

Night was falling and the flagship was signaling the fleet to return to formation. As far as I was concerned, the battle was over; and as I looked around the bridge I could appreciate why the officer had suggested that I go below. He and I and two gunners were the only survivors of the engagement. As I stood up and surveyed the carnage, he came over and spoke to me.

"You fought that gun well," he said.

"Not much like a Pangan spy, do you think?" I said, smiling.

"No, nor not much like a man who has never seen a *lantar* before," he said.

"I have seen other ships, and fought them too, but they sailed on oceans and not on land."

"You will get plenty more fighting tomorrow," he remarked. "We should reach Hor by early afternoon, and then there will really be fighting."

"What is this war all about?" I asked.

"It's a matter of grazing land for the herds," he replied. "Panga wants it all. So we have been fighting over it for the last ten years, and while we have been fighting, the men of Hanganor have stolen nearly all of their herds and the men of Maltor have stolen nearly all of ours."

"Doesn't either side ever win any decisive battles?" I asked.

"Our fleet always defeats theirs," he replied. "But so far we have been unable to take the city of Hor; that would decide the war."

"And then what?" I asked.

He shrugged. "Your guess is as good as mine," he said, "but the chances are we will go to war with Maltor to recover our stolen herds."

After the battle a couple of hospital ships and a transport came up from the rear. The transport brought replacements and the hospital ship took the wounded aboard. Most of the night was devoted to making repairs and there was little sleep.

WHEN morning broke I saw two very strange looking crafts that had come up during the night. They were heavily armored, enormous monstrosities, with cone-shaped prows that came to a sharp point about fifteen feet above the ground. Each had four very heavy guns pointing straight ahead just in rear of the cones. The muzzle of each gun was flush with the surface of the armorplate, the guns themselves being hidden in the interior of the hull. There was one on either side, one above, and one below the prow; lighter, protective t-ray guns, fired from ports along the sides and at the stern. The hulls were cylindrical in shape and the whole ship looked like an enormous torpedo. I could not see what their purpose could be, for it was evident that their maneuverability would be very poor.

Shortly after daylight we got under way, and soon thereafter Danlot sent for me.

"Your conduct during yesterday's action has been reported to me," he said. "Your action was highly commendable and I would like to show my appre-

ciation in some way."

"You can do that," I replied, "by permitting me to rejoin my mate."

Danlot cleared his throat. "That was another matter I wished to speak to you about," he said. "Your mate is missing."

"Missing!" I exclaimed. "What do you mean? Was she killed during yesterday's action?"

"No," he replied. "Vantor's body was found in his cabin this morning. He had been stabbed through the heart, and your mate was not on the ship when they searched it for her."

DUARE gone! Out there somewhere alone and on foot in this strange land.

"You must let me go and look for her," I said.

Danlot shook his head. "You could accomplish nothing," he said. "I have sent two scouting planes to search the country for her."

"That is kind of you," I said.

He looked at me in surprise. "Evidently you do not understand," he said. "Your mate has murdered one of our officers, or at least the evidence indicates as much; and she must be brought to justice."

I was appalled. "You cannot mean that!" I exclaimed. "It is quite obvious why she had to kill him. It is evident that he deserved to be killed."

"We do not look at such matters that way," replied Danlot. "Vantor was a good officer, with years of training. He was extremely valuable to Falsa, much more valuable than forty women. And now," he said, as though the incident were closed as far as I was concerned, "what can I do for you to show my appreciation of what you did yesterday?"

It took all the willpower I possessed not to tell him what I thought of his

justice and his valuation of Duare, but I realized that if I were ever to help her I must not antagonize him; also there was budding in my mind the germ of an idea. "Ero Shan and I would like to help man one of the little fast scouting ships," I said. "They seem to offer a far greater field of action than any of the others."

He looked at me a moment before he replied, and then he said, "You like to fight, don't you?"

"When there is anything to fight for," I replied.

"What have you got to fight for here?" he asked. "You are not a Falsan, and you can certainly have no quarrel with the Pangans, if what you have told me about yourself is true, as you never even heard of them until yesterday."

"I should like to have the opportunity of winning in some measure the confidence and gratitude of Falsa," I replied. "It might temper the judgment of the court when my mate is brought to trial."

"You must hold your women in high esteem in your country," he said.

"We do," I replied, "in the highest esteem. A woman's honor there would be worth the lives of forty Vantors."

"We are different," he said. "We consider women as necessary evils, and little more than that. I have paid more for a good zorat than most women bring. But to get back to your request—I am going to grant it. As you will be here the rest of your lives, you and your friend might as well learn to serve Falsa in some useful way."

"Why do you say that we will be here the rest of our lives?" I asked.

"Because you will," he replied. "It is absolutely impossible to cross the mountains which hem Anlap on the north and the south. To the east is an ocean and you have no ship. To the

west is an unknown land which no man has ever explored. And furthermore, I don't think that you would be permitted to leave. You would know too many of our military secrets, and if by chance you could reach some other country, by the same token those people could reach us; and we have enough trouble with the Pangans without having men from some strange country making war upon us."

AFTER my interview with Danlot I sought out Ero Shan. "You don't know it," I said, "but you want to come with me and help man one of the fast little scouting ships."

"I don't know what you're talking about," he said.

"I know you don't, because I only just now got permission from Danlot for you and me to serve aboard one of the little ships."

"That's all right with me," he said, "but just why do you want to do that?"

I told him about Duare then and that, as service on one of the scouting ships would permit us to range much farther than the main fleet, we might by chance find her, which we never could do aboard a big battleship.

"And then what would you do?" he asked. "The officer in command of the scouting ship would bring Duare back for trial, and you couldn't do anything about it."

"I think we could," I said. "We would have learned how to operate the ship and we have our r-ray pistols—and there would only be five men to dispose of."

Ero Shan nodded. "I see possibilities in that idea," he said with a smile.

While we were still talking, an officer came up and told us that we had been ordered aboard the Athgan 975, which lay alongside the battleship. We immediately went to the lower deck

and out through the door there, where we found the Athgan 975 awaiting us. The word "Athgan" means scout, and it is a compound of ath, meaning look, and gan, meaning man, which gives "look-man," or scout.

The commander of the 975 was a rokor, or sub-lieutenant, named Ganjo. He didn't seem very enthusiastic about having a couple of green men detailed to his ship. He asked us what we could do, and I told him that we were both gunners, so he set Ero Shan at a gun in the stern and me at one in the bow, which pleased me because it permitted me to sit beside the driver—I don't know what else to call him, possibly pilot would be better.

There were seven men aboard the ship in addition to the rokor—the pilot, four gunners, and two torpedomen. The gunners each had two guns, one firing chemical shells and the other t-rays. The guns were double-barreled affairs, the t-ray barrel being on top of the chemical shell barrel, and clamped to it rigidly, so that only one set of sights was necessary. The guns protruded beyond the hull of the ship about three-quarters of their length, and could swing forty-five degrees in any direction. The port and starboard guns and the gun in the stern had a similar range of action. There was a torpedo tube on each side of the ship, so, with our great speed and maneuverability, we were a very dangerous little buggy. From the start I watched every movement that the pilot made and it was not long before I was confident that I could pilot the 975 myself and I was most anxious to try it.

THE squadron to which the 975 was attached raced far ahead of the fleet, and I soon realized why the Falsans wore helmets, for, notwithstanding that we were strapped to our seats with

safety belts, we were banged around considerably, as the little ship raced with terrific speed over all sorts of terrain. Before noon we came in sight of a large city which I knew must be Hor. Up to this time we had not seen anything of an enemy fleet, but now their scout ships and destroyers came racing from one of the city's gates. They far outnumbered us, and as we were merely a scouting force, our squadron commander ordered us to retire. We kept just out of effective range, and one of the athgans was detached and sent back to the main fleet to report to Danlot. We hung around waiting for the main body of the enemy fleet to come out, but they didn't show themselves; and in the early afternoon our fleet put in an appearance, but it heralded itself long before it arrived, sending salvos of shells over our heads which burst inside the city; and the big guns of the city answered from the city walls.

Hor was rather an imposing-looking metropolis, of considerable extent, and with tall buildings showing beyond its lofty wall. It was a huge fortress, which looked absolutely impregnable; nor in ten years had Falsa been able to reduce it.

As we were watching the effect of the shell fire, I saw a direct hit by a thousand-pound shell on one of the taller buildings. There was a terrific detonation and the building simply fell apart. We could hear the crash way out on the plain, and we saw the dust rise high above the city wall. The Pangans replied with a terrific bombardment, which demolished two of our dreadnaughts.

And now the fleet moved closer and I saw the two mighty monstrosities moving up. I asked the pilot what they were.

"Something new that's never been

used before," he replied; "but if they work, the Pangans are in for the surprise of their lives."

Just then three gates flew open and the whole Pangan fleet came out, firing. It seemed to me that it was a very stupid maneuver, for they were all bunched at the gates and offered a splendid target, and I said as much to the pilot.

"You never can tell what the Pangans are going to do," he said. "Their jong probably got mad when that building was demolished and ordered the whole fleet out to punish us. Only about half their fleet was in the battle yesterday; so we will be in for some pretty hot fighting now. Here come the gantors!" he exclaimed. "Now we'll see them in action."

The two huge, torpedo-shaped ships were advancing at considerable speed, with a flock of protecting destroyers on either side. A huge Pangan battleship was coming to meet them, firing every gun that she could bring to bear; but the gantors, as the pilot had nicknamed them, after an elephantine Am-torian beast of burden, came roaring on. The battleship, evidently sensing that she was going to be rammed, turned to run back, coming broadside to the nearer gantor, which suddenly leaped forward at terrific speed.

THERE was no hope for the battleship. The sharp, deadly, armored point of the gantor struck it amidships fifteen feet above the ground and rammed into it for fifty feet, firing its bow guns and its forward port and starboard guns, raking the whole interior of the battleship.

As it hung there a moment, finishing its work of destruction, the other gantor passed it, and you may rest assured the remainder of the Pangan fleet gave it a wide berth, opening up a broad

path for it; and though there was no ship in front of it, it kept on straight toward the city.

The first gantor in the meantime backed out of the stricken battleship and, apparently unscathed, followed its companion. I saw now that each of them was headed for a gate, and I instantly recognized the real purpose for which they had been constructed. We followed close behind one of them with several other athgans. Behind us came a column of battleships.

"If we get inside the city," said our rokor, "we are to take the first left-hand avenue. It leads to the barracks. That is the objective of our squadron. Shoot anyone who offers resistance."

The gates of Hor are of wood covered with armorplate, but when the gantor hit them, they crashed down upon the avenue beyond, and the gantors went over them and we followed, turning into the first avenue at the left.

Through the gates behind us the great battleships had rolled. On toward the center of the city they moved. We could hear the sound of the battle that was being carried into the heart of Hor as we made our way toward the barracks. This building, or series of buildings, we found along one side of an enormous parade ground.

The Pangans were certainly unprepared for anything of this sort. There was not a single gun ready to receive us, the men who rushed from the barracks having only their r-ray pistols and rifles, which were utterly useless against our armored athgan.

The battle went on in the city until almost dark. Falsan athgans ranged the avenues, striking terror to the hearts of her citizens, while the battleships massed in the great square before the jong's palace and dealt death and destruction until the jong surrendered. But in the meantime the main body of

the Pangan fleet had escaped through the rear gates of the city. However, Hor had been taken and the ten-year war was supposedly over.

During the fighting in the city we had suffered three casualties on the 975. The pilot had been killed by a chance r-ray shot through an open port, as had our rokor, and the man at the port gun. I was now piloting the athgan, and as the pilot is supposed to rank directly beneath the rokor, I assumed command of the ship. The only reason I got away with it was because there was no superior officer to know about it and the three remaining Falsans were simple warriors who could have been commanded by anyone with initiative.

I WAITED in the plaza for some time, expecting instructions from my squadron commander, but I got none. Pangans, mostly girls, were moving about the plaza freely; and presently I saw a number of Falsan warriors with them, and it was evident that the men had been drinking. About this time three Pangan girls came to the 975 and offered us liquor in small jugs. Ero Shan and I refused, but the three Falsans on board accepted it enthusiastically, and after a few drinks they became hilarious; and, remarking something to the effect that to the victors belong the spoils, they left the ship and went off arm in arm with the Pangan girls.

Ero Shan and I were now alone on the ship. We discussed our situation and what we might do under the circumstances.

"Now that we have complete possession of the 975," I said, "we might as well take advantage of it and go out and search for Duare."

"We stand about one chance in a million of finding her," he replied, "but I'm for that millionth chance if you are."

"Well we certainly can't find her in the City of Hor," I said; "so we might as well go out and scour the country in the vicinity of the place where she disappeared."

"You realize, of course, what the penalty will be for stealing a ship and deserting when we are finally picked up."

"Oh, we're not deserting," I said, "we're looking for our squadron commander."

Ero Shan laughed. It's all right if you can get away with it," he said.

I headed the 975 back along the avenue down which we had come from the gate at which we had entered the city. Along the entire route we encountered crowds of drunken warriors, singing and dancing with Pangan girls.

"The Pangans seem to be a most hospitable people," remarked Ero Shan.

"The Falsans say that they are fools," I said, "but I should say that it is the Falsans who are the fools right now."

When we reached the gate, which still lay where the great gantor had thrown it, we found it heavily guarded by Falsan warriors, who halted us. There were no girls here, and these men had not been drinking. An officer approached and asked where we thought we were going.

"I am looking for my squadron commander," I replied. "I can't find him in the city and I thought possibly the squadron might have formed outside of Hor."

"You will probably find him up around the central plaza," said the officer. "Most of the fleet is there and none of our fleet is outside the city."

DISAPPOINTED, I turned back and took the main avenue which led toward the center of the city and the jong's palace; and as we proceeded, evidence of the hospitality of the Pan-

gans multiplied, the visible effects of which had degenerated into nothing less than a drunken orgy. One thing that was particularly noticeable was the absence of Pangan men from the avenues, and the fact that few, if any, of the Pangan girls appeared to be under the influence of liquor.

In the central plaza, before the jong's palace, pandemonium reigned. A great many ships of our fleet were there, packed in without military order, their decks filled with Pangan girls and drunken Falsan warriors.

For the purpose of carrying out the fiction that I was looking for my squadron commander, I made inquiries from a warrior attached to the flagship, a man whom I knew would recognize and remember me.

"Squadron commander," he repeated. "He is probably in the palace. The jong is giving a banquet for the officers of our fleet." He handed me a jug. "Have a drink," he invited. "It is good liquor, the best I ever tasted. These Pangans are really wonderful people, treating us this way now that, after ten years, we have won the war and conquered Hor. Have a drink."

"No, thanks," I said. "I have got to get into the palace and find my squadron commander." And we moved off in the direction of the great gates of the jong's palace.

"Do you really mean that you want to get in there?" asked Ero Shan.

"I certainly do," I said. "I think Danlot should know that his entire force is drunk. You come with me, Ero Shan. Whatever happens, we will stick together."

The guard at the palace gate halted us. "I have an important message for the lotokor Danlot," I said.

The man sized us up. Except for our helmets, we wore no regulation article of the Falsan uniform. The fellow hesi-

tated and then he called an officer, to whom I repeated my statement.

"Certainly," he said; "come right in. You will find your commanding officer in the banquet hall."

The corridors of the palace, and the apartments into which we could see as we made our way toward the banquet hall, were filled with drunken Falsan officers and sober Pangans. At the entrance to the banquet hall we were halted again, and once again I repeated the statement that I had a message for Danlot. While we were waiting for an officer whom the sentry had summoned, we had an opportunity to take in the scenes in the banquet hall. Long tables filled the room, at which were seated all the higher officers of the Falsan navy, practically all of whom were obviously under the influence of liquor; and beside each drunken Falsan sat a sober Pangan. On a raised platform at the far end of the room, at a smaller table, sat Hajan, jong of Panga, with the highest officers of his realm and the ranking officers of the Falsan navy. Danlot sat on the jong's right. He was slumped in his chair, his chin resting on his breast. He seemed to be asleep.

"I DON'T like the looks of this," I said to Ero Shan in a whisper.

"Neither do I," he replied. "I think we should get out of here. It would be a waste of time delivering your message to Danlot."

"I'm afraid it's too late anyway," I said. I had scarcely ceased speaking, and we still stood looking into the banquet hall, when Hajan the jong rose and drew his sword. It was evidently a prearranged signal, for simultaneously every Pangan officer in the banquet hall followed the example of his jong, and every Pangan sword was pointed at the breast of a Falsan. Trumpets sounded, and other trumpets carried the

call to arms down every corridor of the palace and out into the city.

I snatched off Ero Shan's helmet and my own and tossed them on the floor. He looked at me in sudden surprise and then smiled, for he realized that now no one could identify us as Falsans, and that for the time being we might be overlooked, possibly long enough to permit us to escape.

A few of the Falsan officers resisted and were killed, but most of them were disarmed and made prisoners. In the confusion we made our way out of the palace and through the gates with a number of Pangan officers.

As we reached the plaza we saw Pangan troops pouring in from every avenue, while Pangan girls were pouring from every ship and fleeing to safety.

The fighting in the plaza was soon over, as it was in other parts of the city, for the drunken, disorganized Falsans could put up little or no resistance since most of them had been surreptitiously disarmed by the Pangan girls.

Within an hour the Falsans had been herded into the plaza before the barracks, and were being held there under guard. Most of them lay asleep on the sward in drunken stupors. A few of those who had been on guard at the gates escaped on foot out into the night. The Pangans had taken thousands of prisoners and the entire Falsan land fleet. It looked to me as though the ten year old war was over.

"The Pangans were not such fools after all," I said to Ero Shan.

We were standing near the 975, looking at it longingly and wondering how we could get out of the city with it, when an officer came up behind me and tapped me on the shoulder.

"Who are you two?" he demanded as I turned around to face him.

"We were prisoners of the Falsans," I replied, "but after the men who were

guarding us got drunk, we escaped." Then I had an inspiration. "We are both gunners," I said, "and I am a pilot. We would like to enlist in the service of your jong."

The officer scratched his head. "You don't look like Falsans," he admitted, "but you're not Pangans; so I'll put you under arrest until morning, and then the proper authorities can decide what is to be done to you." He summoned some soldiers then and told them to lock us up until morning, and then to bring us to his headquarters. From his insignia I saw that he held a rank similar to that of colonel. Nowhere that I have been on Venus have I found any differentiation between Army and Navy, and the ranks that I have translated into military titles a Navy man would probably have translated into Navy titles. I liked the system, for it certainly simplifies matters of precedence and rank, and makes for a unified fighting force comprising all branches of every service.

Ero Shan and I were taken to a guardhouse and locked up; and there ended a day of action, excitement, successes, and reversals; and with it the blasting of my hopes to steal the 975 and prosecute my search for Duare.

THE following morning no one came to take us to the officer who had arrested us until after noon, and as we were conducted through the city we saw columns of dejected Falsans marching through the gates of Hor, out onto the plains beyond. Our guard told us that Danlot and several other high Falsan officers were being held as hostages until the signing of a peace treaty satisfactory to Panga. In the meantime the remainder of the Falsans were being permitted to depart for home, taking with them two ships loaded with provisions. They were faced with a march

of some two thousand miles, with only humiliation and vain regret as their constant companions. Yesterday they had been a victorious army; today they were defeated and disarmed, their entire grand fleet captured by the Pangans.

"I do not envy the next girl who offers one of those men a drink," remarked Ero Shan.

We were taken to the headquarters of Banat, the Yorkokor who had caused our arrest; and he accompanied us to a still higher officer, a lotokor, or general; unless you are a Navy man, in which event you may call him an admiral. Banat explained the circumstances of our arrest, and repeated the statement that I had made to him at the time.

"Where are you from, if you are not from Falsa?" demanded the general. "Perhaps you are from Hangor or Maltor."

"Ero Shan is from Havatoo," I explained, "and I am from Korva, which lies beyond the mountain range to the south."

"There is nothing beyond that mountain range," said the general. "That is the end of the world. Were you to cross those mountains, you would fall into the sea of molten rock upon which Amtor floats."

"There are many countries beyond those mountains," I replied; "and I have lived in several of them ever since I first came to Amtor."

"Since you first came to Amtor!" exclaimed the general. "What do you mean by that? You must have been born on Amtor, and you couldn't have lived anywhere before you were born."

"I was not born on Amtor," I replied. "I was born in a world which at its nearest approach to Amtor is 26,000,000 miles away."

"The man is mad," said the general. "There is no other world but Amtor."

"I am not so mad," I replied, "but that I can fight a gun and pilot a ship; and I would like the chance to do that for Panga until I can resume my search for my mate."

"Your mate? Where is she?"

"She, too, was captured by the Falsans when our anotar was shot down, but she escaped from them the night before they attacked Hor."

"What is an anotar?" he asked.

"It is a ship that flies in the air," I replied. "Ero Shan, my mate, and I were trying to reach Korva in it when the Falsans shot us down."

"A ship that flies in the air!" snorted the general. "First you tell me that you are from another world, and now you tell me that you ride around in a ship that flies in the air. Are you trying to insult my intelligence?"

"Possibly his last statement is true," said Banat. "I was talking with some of the Falsan officers at the jong's banquet last night, and they told me of this marvelous invention which they had shot down, in which two men and a woman were riding through the sky."

"They were drunk," snapped the general.

"They told me this before they had started to drink," replied Banat. "I am sure that in this matter the man is speaking the truth."

"Well, if you want to assume the responsibility for them," said the general, "you may have them and assign them to such duties as you wish."

AFTER we left the general I told Banat that I was more familiar with the small scout ships than with any others, and that I had been a prisoner on the 975, which was in the plaza before the palace, and that I was perfectly capable of piloting it.

Banat took us to his own home, which seemed strange to me until I discovered

that he was tremendously interested in what I had told him about another world than Amtor. He questioned me at length and showed a very intelligent interest in my explanation of our solar system.

"You mean to say that Amtor is a round ball flying around the thing you call the sun?" he demanded. "And that it turns all the way around every day? Why don't we fall off when it's upside down? There's something, my friend, that you will have hard work explaining."

So then I had to explain gravity to him, and I think he grasped it in a vague sort of way, but anyway he was terribly impressed with my knowledge, and he admitted that what I had told him explained many things that had hitherto puzzled him; the one that impressed him most being an explanation of the transition from night to day, which occurred with regularity every so many hours.

"Another thing that has always puzzled me," he said, "is how Amtor could float on a sea of molten rock without itself melting."

The upshot of our conversation was that he became so sufficiently impressed with my experience and erudition that he agreed to let me pilot the 975 and have Ero Shan aboard as a gunner.

Ero Shan and I devoted the next few days to getting the 975 in shipshape condition and erasing all signs of the battle through which she had passed. For this purpose Banat had detailed a number of Pangan mechanics, and as he had attached no officer to the 975, I was in charge of the work.

About ten days after our arrival in Hor, Banat told me that we were ordered out with a fleet that was to take the field the next day against the City of Hangor, whose men had been conducting raids against the Pangan herds

all during their war with Falsa. It was to be a punitive expedition in which the captured Falsan land fleet was to be used. Hangor, he told me, lay on the coast, about five hundred miles east of Hor; and that it was founded hundreds of years ago by outlaws from Hor, and from Onar, the capital of Falsa, who had become roving bandits. He said that they were a bad lot, and now that the war with Falsa was over, the Pangans would devote themselves to the destruction of Hangor.

He assigned six men to complete the crew of the 975, and again he failed to appoint any officer, with the result that I went out in command. It seemed a loose and careless way of doing things, but I was to learn that that was one of the failings of the Pangans. They are at heart not a military people, and they often act impulsively and without due deliberation.

I NOTICED that as we moved toward Hangor there was nowhere near the efficiency displayed that had been apparent when the fleet had been in the possession of the Falsans. The ships must have been strung out over a distance of twenty miles. No scout ships were sent ahead, nor were there any flankers. Even when the fleet was within fifty miles of Hangor it was still not in battle formation, nor were the men on the ships at their stations.

We were paralleling a range of low hills at the time, when suddenly a fleet of fast cruisers and scout ships debouched from a ravine, and before the commander of the Pangan fleet knew what was happening, his force had been cut in two. Chemical shells and t-rays were striking the big ships from all directions, and the little scouts were launching their wheeled torpedos as they ranged up and down our lines, almost without opposition.

The tactics of the Hangors was entirely different in some respects from that of the Falsans. Their fast cruisers ranged up alongside of our big ships, and as they were getting into position, fighting men poured up from the lower decks until the upper decks were filled; and then they poured over our rails and with r-ray guns and swords fell upon our officers and crews from the bridges to the lower decks; and all the while their wicked little scout ships raised havoc up and down the line.

I got into a dogfight with three of them and was holding my own all right till one of their torpedos smashed my starboard track. That was the end of me as far as fighting was concerned; and when they saw that I was out of commission, they streaked off to continue harassing the remainder of our fleet.

Within half an hour of the first attack many of our ships were disabled and the remainder were in full flight, many of them being pursued by fast cruisers and the little scouts.

"Here's where we change navies," said Ero Shan.

"It's all right with me if they'll have us," I replied; "and almost any navy would be better than the Pangans! I never saw such glaring inefficiency and stupidity in my life."

"No wonder the Falsans said they were fools," remarked Ero Shan.

"While nobody is paying any attention to us," I said to Ero Shan, "let's make a break for those hills."

"An excellent idea," he said; and then turned to the Pangan members of our crew. "How about it?" he asked.

"They'd only catch us," said one of the men; "and they'd kill us for trying to escape."

"All right," I said, "do as you please. Come on, Ero Shan," and we jumped from the 975 and started for the hills.

WE REACHED the hills apparently without being observed, but after going up the canyon a short distance we clambered up its side until we reached an elevation from which we could look out over the plains. We could see the 975 and standing beside it the Pangan crew waiting to be made prisoners. In all directions we could see the Pangan ships racing to escape, and the fast cruisers and the scout ships of the Hangors clinging to them relentlessly. Many Pangan ships were out of commission and others had been captured in battle. It was a complete rout, a decisive defeat, and I imagined that the Hangors would go on stealing Pangan herds indefinitely. We remained where we were until the victorious fleet started for Hangor with their prizes and their prisoners. Such disabled ships as they could move at all they towed behind undamaged Pangan battleships.

Now, assured that our flight had not been noticed, we came down into the canyon and made our way back to the 975, where we knew we could find food and water in her lockers.

Before it became too dark we examined the damage that had been done the little scout ship, and discovered that a day's work might put it in running condition again; for there were tools and spare parts aboard.

We started to work immediately, but when darkness fell we had to abandon it.

After we had eaten we discussed our plans and decided to try to find Onar, the capital of Falsa, where we believed Duare must be a prisoner. We thought that by hugging the foot of the northern mountain range we should be far enough away from any city, and off the beaten track so far that there would be no danger of our being discovered; and once in Onar I was sure that we would be well received, for we had

fought with the Falsan fleet and no one there would know that we had also fought on the side of the Pangans. And so we laid our plans, and with such assurance of success that they seemed almost accomplished by the time we fell asleep.

The next morning we were up before dawn, had breakfast, and started working on the track the moment that it was light again.

We worked like a couple of galley slaves under the lash and by mid-afternoon the work was completed.

"There," I said, as we crawled out from under the 975, "in two shakes of a dead lamb's tail we'll be on our way;" and then I saw Ero-Shan looking past me at something, and from the hopeless expression on his face, I guessed that what he saw was not pleasant.

I turned slowly around. Almost upon us were some fifty very savage-looking men mounted upon zortas,* those weird-looking creatures which Amtorians use for saddle animals, but which I hate to dignify with the name of horse.

The men who now surrounded us carried r-ray rifles and pistols as well as swords. They wore gaudy loincloths of many colors, and turbans of similar pattern, which were wound around their heads, leaving one end about a yard long, which hung down over their left

shoulders. Their scowling faces were as hard as granite.

"What are you doing, Pangans?" demanded one of them.

"We are not Pangans," I said; "and we were trying to repair this ship so that we could go to Hangor and get directions for getting out of this country without being captured by the Pangans again."

"You were prisoners of the Pangans?" he asked.

"Yes," I said. "They brought us along with them when they came to attack Hangor yesterday."

"Will that ship run?" asked the man.

"No," I replied; "and it never will. It cannot be repaired."

"If you are not Pangans," the fellow continued, "you must be either Falsans or Maltors. Which are you?"

"Neither," I said.

"You must be lying," he said. "There are no other cities in Anlap."

"We are not from Anlap," I told him.

"Where are you from then?"

"From California," I replied. "It's a little country that's not at war with anybody, and certainly not with Hangor."

HE HAD two of his men dismount and disarm us and then he ordered us up behind two others, and we set off in the direction of Hangor.

The zorats were very fleet and apparently tireless and we must have covered fifteen or twenty miles before we came to a camp just before dark. The camp was in a forest at the edge of a stream at the mouth of a canyon, in which I could see a large herd of Amtorian cattle.

In the camp of these herders, who were also warriors, there were a number of women, but no children; and when we arrived the women were cooking the evening meal. I say cooking the

* They are about the size of a small horse, with long, slender legs suggesting great speed. Their feet are round and nailless, and heavily calloused on the bottom. Their almost vertical pasterns suggest that they might be a hard-gaited beast, but this is not so, for their almost horizontal femurs and humeri absorb the jolts and render the zorat an easy-riding saddle animal. Above their withers and just forward of their kidneys are soft pads or miniature humps, which form a perfect saddle with natural pommel and cantle. Their heads are short and broad with two large, saucer-like eyes and pendulous ears. Their teeth are those of a herbivore, but they can use them effectively as weapons when their short tempers are aroused, although their principal means of defense is their quickness.—Ed.

evening meal—they were cooking a part of it, boiling vegetables over many individual fires. The rest of the meal consisted of meat which they ate raw, the women passing it on huge platters and the men cutting strips from it as they went by.

They were certainly a rough lot, and during the meal and after it there were several bloody fights, mostly over women. I saw one man badly beaten up because he looked at a woman too long. Though they fought viciously upon the slightest provocation, or upon none at all, they did not use their weapons, relying entirely upon their hands, feet, and teeth to inflict damage upon their adversaries. It is a point of honor among them that they do not kill one another, and if one should transgress this unwritten law, the others would fall upon him and kill him.

There was quite a little discussion concerning Ero Shan and myself and the location of California.

"It is a little country that is not at war with us," explained one of the party which had captured us; "and they are going to Hangor to get someone to tell them how to get out of this country and get back to California.

At that everybody laughed.

"You just go right up to Jeft when you get to Hangor," said one of the men, "and tell him you want someone to show you the way back to California;" then everybody laughed again.

"What is so funny?" I asked one of them.

"You would think it funny, too, if you knew Jeft," he replied.

"Who is Jeft?"

"He is our jong; and he is a real jong, too. No slave has ever escaped from Hangor since Jeft became jong."

"You are going to take us back to Hangor to put us into slavery?" I asked.

"Of course," replied the man who had captured us.

"Have you ever been a slave?" asked one of them.

"Yes," I said.

"Well, don't think that you know what slavery is until after you have been one of Jeft's slaves. Then you can boast, if you live through it."

AFTER a while they told us that we could go to sleep, and we curled up on the ground at one side of the camp. "Jeft must be a pleasant person," remarked Ero Shan.

"The Myposans were not pleasant people," I said; "neither were the Brokols, nor the Vooyorgans, but I lived through captivity with them, and I escaped."

"May your luck hold here," said Ero Shan drowsily, and fell asleep.

Early the next morning they mounted us on a couple of zorats and sent us with a guard of five men toward Hangor, which we reached late that afternoon.

Hangor is a mean little walled city, with narrow, crooked, filthy streets, lined with hovels which one could not dignify with the name of houses. Slat-ternly women sat in the doorways and dirty children played in the filth of the streets.

The jong's house, to which we were immediately taken, was larger, but no less disreputable than the others.

Jeft was sitting in an open courtyard in the center of his house when we were taken before him. He was an extremely gross and brutal-looking man, wearing a filthy loincloth that had once had a pattern and a similarly disreputable turban. He was drinking something from an enormous tankard and spilling a great deal of it over his chin and down his front.

"What have we here?" he bellowed,

as we were lead before him.

"Two men from California who escaped from the Pangans during the battle day before yesterday," explained one of the men who had brought us.

"From California, hey?" demanded Jeft. "I've just been waiting to get my hands on one of you zorat thieves from California."

"Oh," I said, "so you are familiar with California, are you?"

"Of course I'm familiar with California," he fairly shouted. "Who says I ain't? You mean to call me a liar? What do you want in my country anyway, comin' in here and calling me a liar?"

"I didn't call you a liar," I said. "I was just pleased to know that you were familiar with California."

"There you go calling me a liar again. If I say you called me a liar, you did call me a liar."

"However, I am still pleased to know you are familiar with California," I said.

"You don't think I'm familiar with California; you don't think I've ever been to California. So! You don't think I've ever been to California, when I say I have. What do you mean, coming here and looking for trouble!"

I did not reply, and he immediately flew into another frenzy. "Why don't you answer me?" he demanded.

"What's the use of answering you when you now all the answers?" I said. "You even know about a country that you never heard of before, and it lies on another world 26,000,000 miles from Amtor. You are a big bag of wind, Jeft, and if I failed to call you a liar before, I do now."

I knew that we could expect no mercy from this man and that nothing I might say to him might make it any easier or any harder for us while we were here. He was an ignorant and a degraded bully and I had taken all from

him that I intended to, let come what might. My words had an entirely different effect upon him than I had anticipated. Like the bag of wind that I had termed him, he deflated as though he had been punctured. He took a big swallow from the tankard, to hide what I imagine was his embarrassment, and then said to the men who had brought us, "Take them away and turn them over to Stalar; and tell him to see that they work."

WE WERE taken through crooked streets, some of them ankle deep in filth, to what appeared to be the extreme limits of the city; and there in a filthy room beside the city walls we were turned over to Stalar. He was a tall man, with thin, cruel lips and close-set eyes. He wore two r-ray pistols and there was a heavy whip lying on the desk in front of him.

"Where are you from?" he asked.

"From California," I replied.

At that he leaped up and seized the whip. "Don't lie to me," he shouted; "you are Pangans."

I shrugged. "All right; have it your own way," I said. "What you or any of the rest of your filthy tribe think doesn't interest me."

At that he came around the desk, the whip in his hand.

"What you need is a lesson, slave," he growled.

I looked him straight in the eye. "If you strike me with that, I'll kill you," I said; "and if you don't think I can, just try it."

The yellow cur backed down. "Who said I was going to strike you?" he said. "I told you I was going to teach you a lesson, and I am—but I haven't got time to bother with you two now. Get on into the compound;" and he unlocked a gate in the outer wall, beyond which was a large enclosure

crowded with men, nearly all of whom were prisoners taken from the Pangan fleet.

One of the first men I saw was Banat, the Pangan officer who had befriended us. He looked terribly dejected, but when he saw us, he came up and spoke to us.

"I thought you had escaped," he said.

"We thought so, too," I replied.

"My men on your ship told me that you had gotten away safely into the hills."

"We did, but we came down to the 975 again for food, and we were captured by a band of Hangorian herders. How are they treating you here?"

He turned his back toward me, revealing a dozen raw welts. "That is how they treat us," he said. "They are building an addition to the city, and trying to speed it up with whips."

"I don't think I can take it," I said.

"You had better take it," he replied.

"I saw two men resist yesterday, and they were both shot dead on the spot."

"That might be the easiest way out," I said.

"I have thought of that," he said, "but one clings to life. There is always hope."

"Maybe Carson can get away with it," said Ero Shan; "he just got away with murder with the jong and with the fellow called Stalar; and they both backed down."

"Some of these slave-drivers they have over us won't back down," said Banat; "they haven't the mentality of a nobargan."

AFTER a while some women entered the compound carrying food to us. It was a filthy mess, in filthy vessels; and not enough to give each man half a meal.

"Who are the women?" I asked

Banat.

"They are slaves that have been captured in raids; their fate is even worse than ours."

"I can imagine so," I said, thinking of the bestial creatures who passed for men in Hangor.

The next morning we were given another similar meal, and taken out to work; and when I say work, I mean work. We were set to cutting and carrying the lava rock with which they were building the wall around the new part of the city. Twenty-five or thirty slave-drivers with r-ray pistols and whips stood over us; and if they saw a man stop even to wipe the sweat from his face, they struck him.

I was set to cutting rock at some little distance from the new wall, but I could see that there were women slaves working there, mixing and laying the mortar in which the rocks were set. After a while Stalar came out among us. He seemed to be looking for someone, and I had a rough idea that he was looking for me. At last he found me.

"How is this slave working?" he asked the slave-driver, who was standing over us.

"All right so far," said the man; "he is very strong. He can lift rocks easily that any two other slaves have to strain to lift."

"Watch him," said Stalar, "and beat him until he screams for mercy if he shirks his work or gives you any trouble; for I can tell you that he is a trouble-maker." Then he walked away.

"What has Stalar got against you?" asked the guard, after the chief slave-driver was out of hearing.

"I haven't the slightest idea," I said, "unless it is that he thinks I am a Pangan."

"Aren't you?" asked the guard.

"No," I replied; but I was careful



Carson drove the trident deep into the fellow's breast

to keep on working diligently all the time, for fear the man was looking for an excuse for whipping me. I had decided that it was foolish to antagonize them up to a point where they would kill me; for there must always be the hope of escape and eventual reunion with Duare if she still lived.

"Stalar's a mean one," said the guard.

"Is he?" I asked. "He has never harmed me."

"Wait," said the man; "he'll get you. I can tell by the way he spoke that he has something against you."

"He wanted you to take it out on me," I said.

"I guess that's right," assented the guard; "but you go on doing your work and I won't bother you. I don't get pleasure out of beating the men the way some of the others do."

"I guess you're a pretty decent fellow," I said.

AFTER I had cut a number of building blocks to the correct size, the guard told me to carry them over to the walls. The guard at the walls told me where to put them down, and I deposited them beside a woman slave who was laying mortar. As I did so, she turned and looked at me, and my heart leaped to my mouth—it was Duare.

I was about to speak, but she silenced me with a finger to her lips; and then she whispered out of the corner of her mouth, "They will beat us both if we speak."

I felt a stinging lash across my back, and turned to face the guard who was overseeing the work at this part of the wall. "What do you mean by loafing around here?" he demanded.

My first impulse was to kill him, and then I thought of Duare. I knew I must suffer anything, for now I must live. I turned and walked away to

bring more rock. The fellow struck me again as I was going, the lash wrapping around my body and bringing blood.

When I got back to my rock pile the guard there saw the welts on my body. "Why did you get those?" he asked.

"The guard at the wall said that I was loafing," I replied.

"Were you?" he asked.

"You know that I do not loaf," I answered.

"That's right," he said; "I'll go with you the next load you carry."

I picked up two more of the building stones, which was one more than any of the other slaves could carry, and started back toward the wall, my guard accompanying me.

When I put the rocks down by Duare, I stopped close to her and brushed my arm against her body. "Courage," I whispered. "I will find a way."

As I stood up the wall guard came up, swinging his whip.

"Loafing around here again, hey?" he demanded, carrying his whip hand back.

"He was not loafing," said my guard. "Leave him alone; he belongs to me."

"I'll whip any lazy slave I want to," said the wall guard; "and you, too, as far as that's concerned;" and he started to lay the lash on my guard. I jumped him then and seized his whip. It was a foolish thing to do, but I was seeing red. I took the whip away from him as easily as though he had been a baby; and when he drew an r-ray pistol I took that from him, too.

NOW Stalar came charging up. "What's going on here?" he demanded.

"This slave just tried to kill me," said the wall guard; "he should be

beaten to death."

Duare was looking on, her eyes wide with terror—terror for what might be going to happen to me. I must say that I was considerably concerned myself, for my brief experience with these cruel, sadistic guards suggested that Stalar might order the wall guard's suggestion put into execution. Then my guard intervened.

"If I were you, Stalar," he said, "I'd do nothing of the sort. This guard was attacking me when the slave came to my rescue. He did nothing more than disarm the man. He offered him no harm."

I could see that Stalar was furious, but he only said, "Get back to your work, all of you; and see that there is no more of this." And then his eyes fell upon Duare. "Get to work, slave," he snapped, and raised his whip to strike her. I stepped between them. "Don't!" I said. Stalar hesitated. He will never know how near death he was then, but he was yellow all the way through, and he was afraid of me.

"Get to work," he repeated, and turned on his heel and walked away.

I went back to my rock pile then with my guard. "That was very decent of you," I said, "and I thank you, but won't it get you into trouble?"

"No," he said. "Jeft, the jong, is my uncle."

I looked at him in surprise. "I must say," I blurted carelessly, "you don't take after your uncle."

To my relief the guard grinned. "My mother was a Pangan slave woman," he said. "I think I must take after her. The Pangans are not a cruel people."

This guard, whose name was Omat, had revealed such a surprisingly sympathetic nature that I felt that I might with safety ask a favor of him, and I was about to broach the matter when

he, himself, gave me an opening.

"Why did you risk your life to protect that slave girl from Stalar?" he asked. "It seems to me that you have already stirred up enough trouble for yourself without doing that."

"She is my mate," I said. "We were captured by the Falsans and separated. I had no idea what had become of her until I saw her laying mortar at that wall. I wish that I might talk with her."

He thought this over for a moment and then he said, "Perhaps I can arrange it for you. You are a good worker, and I don't think you would ever make any trouble if they left you alone. You have done twice the work for me of any other slave, and you have done it without grumbling."

THAT evening, when the female slaves brought our supper to us, I noticed that Omat was in charge of them. He called my name, and when I answered and walked over to him, I saw that Duare was with him. I had not noticed her at first because she had been hidden from me by some of the other slave women.

"Here is your mate," said Omat. "I shall let her remain here while you eat; and you needn't hurry," he added.

I took Duare's hand and pressed it, and we walked off to one side, a little way from the other slaves, and sat down on the ground together. At first neither of us could speak; we just sat there holding hands.

Presently Duare said, "I never expected to see you again. What strange fate brought us together again in Hangor?"

"Providence has been so unkind to us," I said, "that maybe it is trying to make it up to us a little now. But tell me what happened to you, and how it is that you are here."

"It is not a very pleasant story," she said.

"I know, dear," I said, "but tell me what you did after you killed Vantor—and of course it was you who killed him.

She nodded. "Yes. It was in the middle of the night. Everybody on the ship was asleep, including the sentry at the door, which had been left open. I simply walked out; it was that easy; but I didn't know which way to go. My only thought was to get away somewhere and hide, for I knew that if they caught me they would kill me because of what I had done. And in the morning I lay down in some tall grass and slept. When I awoke I saw the battle fleet of the Falsans moving toward the east. I knew you were with it, and though I never expected to see you again, I went along in the same direction, to be as near to you as possible.

"After a while I came to a little stream where I drank and bathed; and then, refreshed, I went on again; but by this time the fleet was out of sight. And then in the middle of the afternoon I saw one of those little scout ships coming toward me and I hid, but evidently they had seen me, for they came directly to my hiding place.

"Half a dozen of these terrible Hangors got out of the ship and seized me. It would have been as senseless as it would have been futile to try to escape them.

"I soon realized that I had fallen into the hands of some very terrible people, and that it was useless to expect either sympathy or kindness from them. Like the bandits they are, they were out looking for any sort of loot or prey they could find. They send these ships out constantly and sometimes in great numbers, especially after a battle between the Falsans and the

Pangans, when they prey upon disabled ships, looting them and taking prisoners.

"The ship I was on was really scouting the battle that they knew was imminent, but in the meantime looking for anything else they could pick up. They continued on to the west and presently discovered our disabled anotar. They could not make out what it was, and when I told them they would not believe me, and one of them flew into a terrible rage because he thought that I was lying to them. I sometimes think that many of them are quite mad."

"I am sure of it," I said. "No normal mind could be as cruel and unreasoning as some of these Hangors. But go on with your story."

"There is not much more to it," she replied. "They stole everything that they could from the anotar, demolished the instruments and the engine, and then came back toward Hangor; and here I am and here are you."

"**A**T least we are together again," I said, "and that is something; for now we can plan on escaping."

"You are always the optimist," said Duare.

"I have escaped before," I reminded her.

"I know," she said. "but somehow this seems so terribly hopeless. Even if we escape from Hangor, we have no way of escaping from the country. Our beloved anotar has been destroyed, and from what I have been told, the mountains to the south are absolutely impassable; and the land is full of enemies."

"I refuse to give up hope," I said.

"What became of poor Ero Shan?" she asked, after a moment's silence.

"He is here," I said; "and I have another friend here, a Pangan officer named Banat. Between the four of us

we may be able to cook up some scheme for escape. By the way, where are you quartered?"

"It is just the other side of that wall," she said. "The men's and the women's compounds adjoin. They tell me that they used to herd them all in together, but there were so many fights, and so many men slaves were killed, that they had to segregate them."

The slaves had finished their meal by this time and the women had returned from their compound to take away the empty bowls. Omat came with them, and beckoned to Duare. We stood up, and I held her in my arms for just a moment; then she was gone. It was good to have had her to myself for even this short time and I felt far more hopeful than I had since she had been taken from the Falsan flagship, though I must admit that my hope lived on very meager fare.

After Duare left I went over and sat down with Ero Shan and Banat.

"Why didn't you come over and see Duare?" I asked Ero Shan.

"You could have so little time together," he said, "that I did not want to rob you of any of it."

"She inquired about you," I said, "and I told her that you were here and that we also had another friend in Banat; and that the four of us should be able to work out some plan whereby we might escape."

"Whatever it is," said Banat, "you can count me in on it. I would rather be killed trying to escape than to remain here to be beaten to death."

The next day Stalar assigned me to another job. I was sent with a dozen other slaves, who, for one reason or another, he particularly disliked, to a large corral where a number of zorats were kept. It was so filled with accumulated filth that the animals were

knee deep in it, and could move around only with the greatest effort.

While the work was offensive and nauseating in the extreme, it had one advantage in that the guards were not near enough to us to crack us with their whips; and as they wouldn't come down into the filth, they sat on the fence and swore at us.

This was all right while we were loading the carts, but we had to push them about a mile outside the city to dump them, where their contents could later be used for fertilizing the fields where they raised vegetables and grain for the zorats that are kept up. It was while we were pushing the carts that the guards could get at us, and then they made up for lost time. One of the guards soon discovered that I was much stronger and much faster than any of the other slaves, so he attached himself to me and made a game of it. He laid wagers with another guard that I could load faster, pull heavier loads, and get them out to the dumping ground sooner than any of the other slaves; and in order to encourage me, he laid on with his lash.

I took it because I had found Duare, and I didn't want anything to happen to me now.

THE other guard had picked out a husky slave, on which he had placed his wager, and he stood over him, lashing him furiously to make him work faster. The wager was on the number of full loads we could take out to the dump during the remainder of the day and a certain amount of money was to be paid on each load which either slave took out more than the other.

It was soon obvious that I should win money for my guard, but the fellow was greedy to collect all that he could; so he lashed me out and lashed

me back, until I was covered with raw welts and the blood was running down my back and sides.

Notwithstanding my anger and my suffering, I managed to control my temper until I felt that I could stand no more. On one trip I got out to the dump after the others had all unloaded and started the return trip to the corral. This left my guard and myself alone at the dump, a mile away from the city and with no one near us. I am a very powerful man, but I was about ready to drop from exhaustion. The afternoon was only about half over, and I knew that the fool would kill me if this went on until night; and as we reached the dump I turned and faced him, leaning on the forked tool which I had been using to load and unload the cart.

"If you were not a fool," I said, "you would not waste your energy and mine by beating me. Pretty soon I shall not have strength enough left to pull the cart after I have loaded it."

"Shut up, you lazy beast!" he cried, "and get to work;" and then he came for me with his whip again.

I jumped forward and seized the whip and jerked it from his hand; and when he started to draw his pistol, I raised the tool as though it had been a spear and drove it into his chest.

It must have pierced his heart, for he died almost instantly. I stooped over his body and took his r-ray pistol from him, concealing it beneath my loincloth; then I laid him near the cart and unloaded its contents upon him until he was completely hidden—a filthy thing buried beneath filth.

I HAD murdered a guard and I could imagine what the penalty would be, but I hoped that I had hidden the evidence of my crime sufficiently well to prevent detection. Unless the body

were discovered, they couldn't very well establish the corpus delicti; in fact, they couldn't even know that a crime had been committed. However, I will admit that I was a little bit nervous as I returned to the corral alone, and I was still more nervous when the other guard, who had accepted the wager, accosted me.

"Where is your guard?" he demanded.

"He followed you back," I said. "He thought that you were having other guards' slaves help your slave load his cart, and he wanted to catch you at it."

"He's a liar," snapped the man, looking around. "Where is he?"

"He must be here," I said, "for he is not with me;" and then I started loading my cart again.

The disappearance of my guard might have constituted an absorbing mystery if the other guard had told anybody about it, but he didn't. He was too crooked and too greedy. Instead, he told me to slow down or he would beat the life out of me.

"If you will protect me from the other guards," I said, "I will work so slow that you will be sure to win."

"See that you do," he said; and so I took it easy all the rest of the afternoon.

At quitting time the guard whose slave had been pitted against me was really worried. He had won his wager, but there was no one from whom to collect his winnings.

"Are you sure your guard came back to the corral?" he asked me.

"That's where he said he was going when he left me," I replied. "Of course, I was working so hard that I didn't watch him."

"It is very strange," he said. "I cannot understand it."

When the women slaves brought our food to us that evening Omat was not

with them, but Duare was there and she brought my bowl to me. Ero Shan and Banat were with me. I had outlined a bold plan to them and they both had agreed to see it through or die in the attempt.

As Duare joined us we gathered around her, trying to hide her from the guards; and then we moved off into a far corner of the compound, in the shadow of one of the shelters beneath which the slaves slept.

Duare sat down on the ground and we crowded around her, effectually hiding her from view from any part of the compound. There were only two guards, and they were engrossed in conversation. One of them had come with the women, and when they left he would leave, returning only when they collected the empty bowls. The guards were always sleepy at night and they didn't bother us unless some slave raised a disturbance, and night offered the only rest that we had from their cruelty.

As I ate I explained my plan to Duare, and presently I saw that she was crying. "Why the tears?" I asked. "What is the matter?"

"Your poor body," she said; "it is covered with welts and blood. They must have beaten you horribly today."

"It was worth it," I said, "for the man who did it is dead, and I have his pistol hidden beneath my loincloth. Because of these welts, which will soon heal, we have a chance to escape."

"I am glad you killed him," she said. "I should have hated to live on, knowing that a man who had treated you so, still lived."

AFTER a while the women slaves came back and collected the empty bowls, and we were fearful that one of the slave women might discover Duare and expose her; but if any of

them saw her, they said nothing; and they were soon gone, and their guard with them.

We waited until nearly midnight, long after the compound had quieted down and the slaves had fallen asleep. The single guard sat with his back against the gate that opened out toward the corral where I had worked that day. Another gate opened into the city and a third into the compound of the female slaves; but these it was not necessary to guard, as no slaves could escape in either of these directions. I stood up and walked over toward him, and as he was dozing he did not notice me until I was quite near him; then he leaped to his feet.

"What are you doing here, slave?" he demanded.

"Sh!" I said. "I have just heard something that you ought to know."

"What is it?" he asked.

"Not so loud," I said in a whisper; "if they know that I am telling you, they will kill me."

He came closer to me, all attention now. "Well, what is it?"

"Four slaves are planning on escaping tonight," I told him. "One of them is going to kill you first. Don't say anything now, but look over there to your left." And as he looked I drew the pistol from beneath my loincloth and placing it over his heart, pressed the button. Without a sound he died, falling forward upon his face.

I stooped and quickly lifted him into a sitting position, propped against the wall beside the gate; then I took his pistol from him, and looking back saw that Duare, Ero Shan, and Banat were tiptoeing toward me.

We spoke no word as I opened the gate and let them out. Following them, I closed it gently.

I handed the extra pistol to Ero Shan, and then led them down to the

corral where the zorats were confined. Stealthily we stole among the brutes, speaking soothingly to them, for they are nervous and short-tempered. They milled a little and tried to move away from us, but finally we each captured one, seizing them by an ear, which is the way they are led and controlled.

We led them down to the gate, which I opened, and then we mounted. No saddles or bridles are used upon the creatures; one guides them and stops them by pulling on their long, pendulous ears. A pull on the right ear turns them to the right, a pull on the left ear to the left, and by pulling on both ears they may be stopped. They are urged forward by kicking them with the heels, while a gentle pull on both ears slows them down.

As the zorats' corral is outside the city wall, we were, for the time being at least, free; and as soon as we had left the city a short distance behind, we put heels to our weird mounts and sped up the broad valley at top speed. There was to be no rest for those zorats that night, nor for us either, for we must pass the camp of the herd-ers before daylight, if we were to be reasonably safe from detection and pursuit.

IT was a hard ride, but we felt that it would be a successful one. We had the hills on our left to guide us, and the big eyes of our mounts permitted them to see in the dim light of an Amtorian night.

Duare and I rode side by side, with Banat and Ero Shan directly behind us. The padded feet of the zorats gave forth no sound and we rode like ghosts through the darkness.

Presently Ero Shan moved up beside me. "We are being pursued," he said. "I just happened to look back and I saw a number of mounted men follow-

ing us, and they are gaining on us rapidly."

"Give Banat your pistol," I said, "and then you go ahead with Duare. You will find plenty of arms and ammunition on board the 975."

"No," said Duare decisively, "I shall not leave you. We will stay together until the end."

I knew from her tone of voice that it was futile to argue, so I told them that we would have to ride faster; and I urged my zorat to even greater speed.

They may not be very beautiful, but they are really wonderful little saddle animals. They are almost as fast as a deer and have tremendous endurance, but they had come a long way and I didn't know whether they would hold out or not.

Looking back, I saw what appeared to be quite a number of mounted men bearing down on us rapidly. "I guess we are going to have to fight," I said to Ero Shan.

"We can get a few of them before they get us," he replied.

"I won't go back to Hangor," said Duare; "I won't! Kill me before they can get me, Carson; promise me that you will."

"If I fall," I replied, "you ride on to the 975;" and then I told her how to start the motor, which was quite similar to that of the anotar with which she was so familiar. The fuel used in the motor is the same as that which we used in the anotar. The element 93 (vik-ro) is released upon a substance called lor, which contains a considerable proportion of the element yor-san (105). The action of the vik-ro upon the yor-san results in absolute annihilation of the lor, releasing all its energy. When you consider that there is 18,000,000,000 times as much energy liberated by the annihilation of a ton of coal as by its combustion, you will

appreciate the inherent possibilities of this marvelous Amtorian scientific discovery. Fuel for the life of the 975 could be carried in a pint jar.

After a brief argument I persuaded Duare to promise me that if I fell she would try to reach the 975, and seek a passage through the southern mountains beyond which we were positive Korva lay. And then the pursuers were upon us.

AS I turned on my mount, my r-ray pistol ready in my hand, prepared to sell my life dearly. I heard Ero Shan laugh and an instant later I had to laugh myself.

"What are you laughing at?" demanded Duare.

"Look," I said; "our pursuers are the zorats which escaped from the corral and followed after their companions."

We must have passed the herders camp just before dawn, and later on in the morning we saw the 975, far ahead of us, where we had left it. I was greatly worried for fear the herders might have been there ahead of us and damaged it in some way, but when we reached it we found it in the same shape that we had left it; but we did not relinquish our zorats until I had started the engine and demonstrated to my own satisfaction that the 975 was in running order, then we turned them loose and they started grazing around us with their fellows.

I told Ero Shan and Banat to be prepared to fight either the port, starboard or stern guns, if the necessity arose, and I kept Duare up forward with me, for she could fire the bow gun if we got into action, a thing none of us anticipated.

Banat wanted to return to Hor, where, he assured me, we would be well received, but I was fearful to risk

Duare further, and Hor might again be in the hands of the Falsans. I told Banat, however, that I would approach Hor after dark, and that he could then make his way on foot to the city; and he agreed that that was fair enough.

"I should have liked, however, to have shown you some of the real hospitality of Hor."

"We were witnesses of the hospitality of Hor," I replied.

Banat laughed. "We are not such fools as the Falsans think us," he said.

"Look!" said Duare excitedly. "There is a ship approaching." We all looked then, and sure enough, off our starboard bow we could see a small scout ship racing toward us.

"The only way we can avoid a fight," I said, "is by turning back, and I certainly don't want to do that." *

"Then let's fight," said Duare.

"What do you think she is, Banat?" I asked.

He took a long look and then he replied, "She is one of those fast Hangor faltars, as we call them." Faltar means pirate ship, and is a contraction of the combination of the two words fal, meaning kill, and anotar, ship. "And they are fast," he added. "I doubt if the 975 could run away from her."

I swung around and headed right toward her, and as soon as we were within range Duare commenced firing chemical shells. She made a clean hit on the bow, right in front of the pilot's seat; and then she sent a stream of t-rays for the mark. They were firing their bow gun, too, but they were not so fortunate as we, or else they didn't have as good a gunner, for they scored nothing but clean misses.

WE HAD both slowed down to permit greater accuracy in our fire, and were approaching each other slowly now, when suddenly the faltar veered

to the left, and I could tell instantly from her erratic maneuvering that the pilot had been hit. Their starboard gun was bearing on us now, but Duare had the whole side of their ship as a target, and our starboard gun could now also be brought to bear. Several chemical shells hit us. I could hear the plop of their bursting, and both Duare and Ero Shan, who was manning our starboard gun, scored hits with chemical shells, which they followed immediately with their deadly t-rays.

In the meantime Banat had run a torpedo into the starboard tube, and now he launched it. It went straight for its target, and the explosion which followed nearly capsized the faltar, and put her completely out of commission.

It was a short fight, but a sweet one while it lasted. However, I was glad to turn away and resume our journey toward Hor, leaving the disabled Hangor ship still firing at us futilely.

We drew off a few miles and then got out and examined the hull of the 975. There were several places where the t-ray insulation had been dissolved, and these we patched up with new insulation before we proceeded.

I asked Banat if it were true that no one had ever crossed the mountains to the south, or seen any indications of a pass through them.

"As far as I know," he said, "they have never been crossed, but on one or two occasions our herders have reported that when the clouds rose up, as you know they sometimes do, they have seen what appeared to be a low place in the range."

"Have you any idea where it is?" I asked.

"It is about due south of Hor," he replied. "That is where our best grazing land is."

"Well, we'll hope that the clouds rise up when we go there," I said; "but

whether they do or not, we are going to cross the southern range."

"I wish you luck," said Banat; "and you'll need it, especially if you succeed in getting into the mountains at all."

"Why?" I asked.

"The Cloud People," he replied.

"Who are they?" I demanded. "I never heard of them."

"THEY live in the mountains, always among the clouds. They come down and steal our cattle occasionally and when they do, every portion of their bodies is covered with fur garments, with only holes for their eyes and a hole to breathe through. They cannot stand our dry atmosphere. In olden times people used to think that they were a hairy race of men until our herdsman killed one of them, when we discovered that their skin was extremely thin and without pores. It is believed that they must perspire through their noses and mouths. When the body of the one who was killed by our herders was exposed to the air the skin shriveled up as though it had been burned."

"Why should we fear them?" I asked.

"There is a legend that they eat human flesh," replied Banat. "Of course, that may be only a legend in which there is no truth. I do not know."

"They wouldn't stand much chance against the 975," said Ero Shan.

"You may have to abandon the 975," suggested Banat; "a lantar, you know, is not exactly built for mountain climbing."

It was well after dark when we approached Hor. Banat importuned us again to come into the city. He said that at the gate it would be revealed whether the Falsans were still occupying Hor.

"As much as I'd like to," I said, "I cannot take the chance. If the Falsans are guarding your gates, a single lucky

shot might put us out of commission; and you well know that they would never let a strange lantar get away from them without some sort of a fight."

"I suppose you are right," he said; and then he thanked me again for aiding in his escape, and bidding us good-bye, he started off on foot for the city and was soon lost in the darkness. That, perhaps, is the last time that I shall ever see the yorkokor Banat, the Pang-an.

And now we moved slowly through the night toward the south, and our hearts were filled with thankfulness that we had come this far in safety, and our minds with conjecture as to what lay ahead of us in the fastnesses of the mountains which no man had ever crossed, the mountains in which dwelt the Cloud People who were supposed to eat human flesh.

WHEN morning came we saw the mountains far away to the south of us, their summits hidden in the eternal clouds. Only the lower slopes were visible up to an altitude of some five thousand feet. What lay above that was the mystery which we must solve. As we approached more closely we saw a herd of zaldars,* the Amtorian beef cattle. Several herders, who had discovered us, were attempting to drive them toward the mountains, with the evident intention of hiding them in a canyon which opened in front of them and where they evidently believed a

lantar could not follow.

The herders, mounted on their zorats, soon disappeared with the entire herd into the mouth of the canyon, the herders evidently believing us to be raiders.

I should like to have had one of the zaldars for some fresh beef, but although the 975 could have overhauled the herd and I could have shot some of the beasts, I would not do so because I realized that they belonged to the Pangans.

As the canyon into which the herders had driven their charges seemed to be a large one, and as it lay directly south of Hor, I felt that we should explore it; and so I piloted the 975 into it.

We had advanced but a short distance into the canyon when we saw fully a hundred herders lined up across the mouth of a narrow side canyon, into which they had evidently driven their herd. The men were all armed with r-ray rifles, and as soon as we came within sight, they dropped down behind the stone wall which served both as a fence to pen their herd and as a breastwork behind which to defend it.

WE HAD been running without colors, as we really didn't know what we were and couldn't have decided until we had been able to see the colors of any potential enemy, when we would immediately have run up his colors on the flagstaff that rises above the pilot's seat.

Positive that these were Pang-an

*A zaldar is a most amazing appearing animal. It has a large, foolish-looking head, with big, oval eyes, and two long, pointed ears that stand perpetually upright as though the creature were always listening. It has no neck and its body is all rounded curves. Its hind legs resemble in shape those of a bear; its front legs are similar to an elephant's, though, of course, on a much smaller scale. Along its spine rises a single row of bristles. It has no tail and no neck, and from its snout depends a long tassel of hair. Its upper jaw is equipped with broad, shovel-like teeth, which

always protrude beyond its short, tiny lower jaw. Its skin is covered with short hair of a neutral mauve color, with large patches of violet, which, especially when it is lying down, make it almost invisible against the pastel shades of Amtorian scenery. When it feeds it drops down on its knees and scrapes up the turf with its shovel-like teeth, and then draws it into its mouth with a broad tongue. It also has to kneel down when it drinks, for, as I have said before, it has no neck. Notwithstanding its strange and clumsy appearance, it is very fast.—Ed.

herders, and not wishing to get into a fight with them or anyone else, I now ran up the Pangan ensign.

A man stood up behind the breastwork then and shouted, "Who are you?"

"Friends," I replied. "Come over. I want to talk to you."

"Anyone can run up a Pangan ensign," he replied. "What are your names?"

"You don't know us," I replied, "but we are friends of the yorkokor Banat, whom we have just left at Hor."

"He was captured by the Hangors," replied the man.

"I know it," I said, "and so were we. We just escaped with Banat yesterday."

The herder walked toward us then, but he kept his rifle ready. He was a nice-looking young fellow, with a fine face and a splendid physique. As he approached I opened the door and dropped to the ground. He stopped when he saw me, immediately suspicious.

"You're no Pangan," he said.

"I didn't say that I was, but I fought with the Pangan fleet when it went to fight Hangor; and I was captured when the fleet was routed."

"Are you sure that the yorkokor Banat is safe in Hor?" he demanded.

"We let him out last night near the gates," I said; "and if Hor is not in the hands of the Falsans, he is safe. It was because of the fear that it might be that we did not go any closer to the city."

"Then he is safe," said the young fellow, "for the Falsans were defeated and sent home on foot."

"We knew that," I replied, "but things turn about so suddenly here in this country that we didn't know but what they had returned and reconquered Hor. You knew Banat?" I

asked.

"I am his son, and this is his herd. I am in charge of it."

Duare and Ero Shan had come out and joined us by this time and the young fellow looked them over curiously. "May I ask," he said, "what you are doing up in these mountains?"

"Our country lies beyond them," I explained, "and we are trying to find a pass to the other side."

He shook his head. "There is none, and if there were, the Cloud People would get you before you could get through."

"Your father told me that Pangan herders had sometimes seen a low place in the range when the clouds rose."

"Yes," he said. "That is about ten miles down the valley; but if I were you, I'd turn back. If you are friends of my father, you can go and live in Hor, but if you keep on you will surely die. No man has ever crossed this range."

"We are going to try it, nevertheless," I told him; "but if we find we can't make it, we'll come back to Hor."

"Then if you live I will see you there," he said, "for you will never get through this range. I have been in it a little way in several places, and I can tell you that the cliffs and gorges are simply terrific."

HIS men had followed him out and they were standing around listening to our conversation. Finally one of the older men spoke up. "I was up in that canyon ten miles from here about five years ago when the clouds rose higher than I have ever seen them. I could see sky beyond the low peaks. The canyon branches after you have gone into it about a mile and if there is any way to cross the range there, it would be up the righthand fork. That's the one I'd take if I were going to try

it."

"Well, thanks for the information," I said; "and now we must be on our way. Tell your father that we got this far at least."

"How are you fixed for meat?"

"We haven't any," I replied.

He turned to one of his men. "Go and get a quarter of that zaldar we butchered yesterday," he said; "and you go with him," he said to another, "and help him with it, and bring along a bundle of smoked meat, too."

I was certainly grateful for these additional provisions. I had no Panggan money to pay for them with, but I offered him some of our ammunition. He refused, saying that we might need it; and after the meat was brought we bade them goodbye and started in search of the canyon that might lead us to Korva, or to death.

WE found the mouth of a large canyon exactly where they had told us we would, and after going up it about a mile we came to the fork and took the one that led to the right. It was getting late and the clouds were pretty low above us now, so we decided to stop for the night. We were all armed now with rifles and pistols, but we were mighty careful to keep a sharp lookout as we descended from the 975 to gather wood for a fire to cook our zaldar steaks.

We finally had a good fire going and were broiling the steaks when we heard savage roars coming toward us from up the canyon. We were immediately on the alert, standing with our rifles ready, for I recognized the roars as those of the tharban, a lion-like Amtorian carnivore. But it wasn't any tharban that came in sight first, but the strangest looking figure that I have ever seen—a human being entirely encased in furs, with only holes for its

eyes and for breathing purposes.

"One of the Cloud People," said Duare.

"And he is about to be not even that," said Ero Shan.

When the Cloud Man saw us he hesitated, but then a terrific roar of the tharban sent him on again.

"Get the tharban," I said, and raised my rifle. Ero Shan and I fired simultaneously and the great cat leaped high into the air with a piercing shriek and then Duare put another stream of r-rays into it as it hit the ground, but I think it was already dead. By that time the Cloud Man was right in front of us, and he stood looking at us, still hesitating.

"You had a close call," I said. "I am glad that we were here to kill the tharban."

He still stood looking at us in silence for a moment, and then he said, "Aren't you going to kill me?"

"Of course not," I said; "why should we?"

"All the plains people try to kill us," he replied.

"Well, we won't kill you," I assured him; "and you are free to go whenever you wish to."

"What are you doing up in these mountains?" he asked. "These belong to the Cloud People."

"Our country is on the other side of these mountains," I told him. "We were trying to find the way through."

AGAIN he was silent; this time for a full minute. It is strange to stand looking at a man all muffled up like that and not to have any inkling of what is passing in his mind because his eyes and his face are hidden from you.

"My name is Mor," he said presently. "You have saved my life and for that I will guide you through the

Mountains of the Clouds. You cannot go through by night, but in the morning I will come for you;" and without another word he turned and walked away.

"We must have left the jinx behind," said Duare.

"I think I buried him under the fertilizer back there in Hangor," I said. "This is certainly a lucky break if it is true, but it is almost too good to be true."

We ate our steaks, and some dried fruit and vegetables which Duare had boiled in water for us, and then we went into the 975, locked the door, and threw ourselves down to sleep, utterly exhausted.

When morning came we were up early and while we were eating our breakfast we saw fully a hundred furred Cloud Men coming down the canyon toward us. They stopped about a hundred yards from the 975 and one of them advanced.

"I am Mor," he said; "do not be afraid. We have come to take you through the Mountains of the Clouds."

"Those are about the pleasantest words I have heard for a long time," said Duare, in an aside to me.

"Can we get through in this lantar?" I asked Mor.

"There will be one or two bad places," he said, "but I think that you can get through with it. Can it climb?"

"It can climb," I said, "almost anything but a vertical cliff."

"Follow us," said Mor. "You will have to stay very close, for you plains people cannot see very far in the clouds. Some of my men will walk on either side to warn you of danger. Pay close attention to them, for after we have climbed away the least mistake you make may send you into a gorge thousands of feet deep."

"I shall pay attention," I assured

him.

Mor walked directly in front of us and I kept the nose of the 975 almost touching him. The canyon rose steeply, but it was broad and level at this point and we had no difficulty at all, and in about half an hour we entered the clouds. From then on it was one of the most nerve-racking experiences that I have ever endured.

We climbed continually and Mor turned and twisted up what must have been one of the most God-awful trails in existence. We made numerous hair-pin turns, and on several occasions the side of the 975 scraped the rocky wall while on the opposite side there was nothing but billowing clouds, through which, at the level of the lantar, I could see the tops of trees waving, and I knew that we must be on a narrow ledge, little wider than the ship.

AFTER we had entered the clouds Mor and the other Cloud Men whom I could see had divested themselves of their furs, which they rolled into neat bundles and strapped on their backs. Now they were entirely naked and as entirely hairless. Their thin skins were of the color of a corpse, and as they climbed they panted like dogs and their tongues hung out of the corners of their mouths. Their eyes were very large and round and they had tiny noses, the combination giving them a most owl-like expression. I think they were quite the most hideous creatures that I have ever seen.

When I thought that we must be at the top of the highest mountain that had ever existed on any planet, we rolled onto a level surface and after a few minutes Mor raised his hand for us to stop.

He came back then and said, "We will rest here. This is our village."

I looked about me, but saw nothing

but clouds, or perhaps I should better say fog, through which the visibility was not over fifty feet, if that much. Presently women and children materialized out of it and came and talked with the men and looked at the lantar; but they seemed afraid of it and remained at a safe distance.

"How much farther," I asked Mor, "before we will be down out of the clouds on the other side?"

"If we are lucky, we will reach the summit tonight," he said; "and then late tomorrow you will be below the clouds on the other side."

My heart sank. The rest of this day and another day tomorrow was not very pleasant to look forward to. Our nerves were almost a wreck already, but we lived through it and late the next day we came down below the clouds into a beautiful canyon.

Mor and his companions had donned their fur suits and surrounded the lantar. I told Ero Shan to bring the quarter of beef, and I got out to thank Mor and say goodbye; and I offered the beef to him when Ero Shan brought it.

"You have plenty?" he asked.

"We can get along," I replied, "with what food we have."

"You cannot tell," he said. "There are no herds on this side, only wild game, and sometimes rather difficult to get."

"But I want to repay you for what you have done for us," I said.

"No," he said. "You owe us nothing.

You saved my life; for that I can never repay you. And know," he added, "that you are always welcome in the home of the Cloud People."

I thanked him, and we bade them goodbye then, and started off down the canyon.

"And these were the impossible mountains," I said.

"And those were the man-eaters who would destroy and devour us," said Duare.

"Banat would be surprised if he knew how easily we had accomplished the impossible," remarked Ero Shan.

"And we have the tharban to thank," I said. "That was certainly a lucky break for us; for without Mor's gratitude we should never have come through. It would have been impossible to have found or negotiated that trail without his help and guidance."

We went on down the canyon to its mouth, where there opened before us a scene that was to us one of exquisite beauty, for I recognized distant landmarks of a terrain over which I had flown many times, and I knew that we had reached Korva; and in the distance I imagined that I could see the towers and spires of Sanara.

We had been gone a year or more. We had suffered appalling vicissitudes. We had survived unspeakable dangers. We had overcome seemingly insuperable obstacles, but at long last we were home.

THE END

FLYING SUITS

WITH planes going higher and higher to fight this war of ours, it's becoming increasingly difficult to keep pilots warm at higher altitudes where temperatures often plummet to fifty below zero. Flying suits made of fur and sheep-skin, when made heavy enough for the job, become so bulky that the pilot feels like he's in a straight-jacket; but now we have the solution to this

problem, the "Stratosphere Suit," long ago mentioned in AMAZING STORIES.

This new flying suit, developed by General Electric engineers, is electrically heated just like a huge electric pad. The temperature can be adjusted to almost any altitude and, most important of all, the new suits are cheaper and many pounds lighter than sheepskinlined garments.

THE ELECTRICAL



BUTTERFLIES

by **ROSS ROCKLYNNE**

Very pretty, these illuminated butterflies; but what they did to a man wasn't so pretty. They lit on your head and . . .

"COME here, Mr. Harrington!" said the dean.

Dean Tarrant was my boss, occupying the adjoining office. He was the soul of Edgemont University, a stalwart aristocrat with gray at the temples, and a modulated voice which was so controlled that any least deflection from

it easily indicated sarcasm or impatience or any one of a half dozen other unpleasant moods. He ran Edgemont with the loving care a parent gives its child.

The afternoon classes were in full swing and there wasn't much to do. I was leaning back in my swivel chair,

Harrington extended his wand, and touched the hypnotized girl's head



surreptitiously cracking English walnuts, thinking about Susan (Professor Prestpsler's daughter) and glancing at the rather unusual news items on the front page of The Edgemont City Clarion. Cracking walnuts was part of my reaction against dignity. I loved Edgemont, I adored Edgemont, but my heart was with the rowdy athletic side of her.

I had just come to the conviction that, judging from the news items—an unusual amount of murders, arsons, robberies and international disputes—that the world was on another tantrum, when the dean gave vent to an annoyed exclamation. An annoyed exclamation from him is equivalent to an explosion of temper from you. That was Dean Tarrant.

When he called me, I arose, hastily brushing walnut shells from my pants. The dean was standing near the window, looking out over South Field, beyond the Commons. A look of wounded unbelief tugged at his underlying jowls. He pointed.

"Is that Professor Prestpsler?"

"I'm afraid it is, sir."

"But what's he *doing*?"

"Chasing butterflies, sir."

"Chasing—!" He stopped, apparently unable to go on.

In the interval, I stole a look at the professor. He was little more than an elongated dot, running into the face of the Sun, through the stubble the haymower had left. His coattails lifted out behind him like rudders to guide his flight. I briefly saw the wings of his quarry—probably a common *Pieris Brassicae* or *Cynthia cardui*—flash in the Sun. But Prestpsler's long net swished out with as much enthusiasm as if he were on the trail of a new species. Then he ran headlong into a birch sapling and fell flat on his face.

Dean Tarrant gave birth to a gasp.

"Why—" He squinted again, as if unable to believe his eyes. He turned icily to me. "How long has this been going on, Mr. Harrington? The disgrace of it! A respectable professor of physics making such a spectacle of himself."

I said uneasily, "Why, since the beginning of the first semester, I imagine, sir. He says the South Field is ideally—"

Tarrant drew forth a handkerchief and blew his nose with an explosive sound. He turned back to his desk. I could see wrath settling into the lines and hollows of his ascetic face. He picked up the phone and dialed Prestpsler's secretary.

"Mr. Hastings? Please ask Professor Prestpsler to step into my office after his next class!"

I said "oh-oh" to myself and quietly slunk back to my desk. I knew I should have kept my mouth shut. But everybody had at one time or another lined up on the fence and watched Prestpsler's antics.

I PICKED up the paper again, and frowning, took up where I'd left off. As I say, I had the conviction that something strange was going on in the world. In one day's news you don't generally find a dozen mass murders, an equivalent amount of arson, larceny and similar crimes. Authorities were speaking of a "crime wave." But apparently they had ventured no opinion on the greater evils that were extant, i. e., three simultaneous South American Revolutions, the slap in the face the Chief Justice had given the President of the United States, the millionaire who had scattered his holdings indiscriminately on the market, with the result of an incipient financial panic. But I couldn't explain them either.

I turned the pages over — always

keeping a weather ear open for signs of the dean getting up—and came to an item on page four.

Wilkes Observatory, May 26, AP. — John K. Howard, staff worker here, last night reported seeing through the newly-installed 33-in. telescope an aggregation of small, luminous particles as they struck the atmosphere. Howard says the "cloud" disappeared from the line of sight before he could swing the telescope. The chief of staff here suggests that the "cloud" was either a meteoric display or the result of an optical defect in the new telescope, but is further investigating the subject.

The item, of course, meant nothing to me. I closed the paper and wondered if Prestpsler would get out of this fix. I felt a personal interest in the case, since Susan, his daughter, was going to be my wife.

The door to my office opened around four-thirty. There stood Professor Prestpsler, his textbook tucked under one skinny arm and a mess of examination papers under the other.

He came into the office. "Hello, Bob," he said in his gentle, mellow voice. "My, isn't it a hot day?—and such a difficult class. Sometime, I do believe I'll retire and devote myself entirely to—"

I stopped him hastily. "Dean Tarrant wants to see you, sir," I whispered tensely.

"So I understand," he agreed mildly.

"Better watch out, sir," I whispered. "He's on the war path. He saw you running after butterflies, and he doesn't like it even a little bit."

"Doesn't like it?" Prestpsler looked astonished. "Oh, but surely, Bob, he can't disapprove—" The sentence

dribbled away, and the lines of his thin, hungry face settled into an expression of apprehension. He straightened his skinny frame and edged into the dean's office.

I STOOD behind the door jamb and listened.

Prestpsler said nervously, "You wanted to see me, sir?"

I could fancy Tarrant looking up, fumbling at his glasses.

"Why, sir—" Then Tarrant stopped. He was controlling himself. His chair scraped back. He said icily, "Professor Prestpsler, you understand that Edgemont is an ultra-respectable university, maintaining rigid standards of dignity through the circumspect action both of its students and its faculty?"

"Naturally sir, and it has always been my aim—"

"And that the department of physics here is famed for its profound contributions to the cause of science?"

"I have done my part to add to its great achievements," the professor volunteered hopefully, "and I—"

Tarrant's fist came down on the desk. "Then why detract from it by making a fool of yourself chasing butterflies?" he whispered acidly. "Professor Prestpsler, to say that I am shocked, completely bewildered, by this unwarranted action—" Then he stopped again, and I could hear poor Prestpsler stuttering helplessly to himself.

The dean's chair creaked as he sat down. He rattled some papers warningly. "That will be all, sir! But please remember that any repetition of this outrage may result in an action neither you nor I will relish! Good-day!"

And the professor came out of his office into mine, his thin shoulders drooping, his head shaking mournfully back and forth. "I can't understand

it," he muttered. "I can't understand!"

I TOLD Susan the story that night, when she wondered why her father appeared so spiritless. I had been going with Susan for more than a year now. Our romance had been unfictionally smooth, and we were going to be married. But somehow, on this particular night, there was something peculiar about Susan. She was curious about her father, but *not* sympathetic. She gave my story an almost callous disregard.

"He'll get over it," she said casually. She stood before the mirror and preened her hair for so long that I said.

"Come, come, sister! You've got a dinner-date, remember?"

Her head pivoted. Not a smile cracked her lusciously curved face. "So? Run away and eat alone then, little boy." She turned back to the mirror. She proceeded to take her time.

Of course, it was a joke and I grinned and wrapped one arm around her and tried to drag her away.

She twisted out of my arms. She said through her teeth. "Keep your hands off. When I want them on me, I'll let you know." She dropped her eyes to her comb, and looked at it almost vacuously. Then she tossed it over her shoulders. "All right. Come on, and don't look as if you've been bitten."

She swished around toward the door, and I followed, shaking my head and refusing to believe my senses.

In the restaurant I decided it was still a joke. I bought a paper and gave her the funny papers to read while we waited for the waiter to react to our presence. She liked Gene Aherne's Little Hitchhiker.

Susan shoved the funny papers onto

the floor and sprawled half over the table on her elbows. I began to boil a little.

"Sit up straight," I prompted her. "And what's wrong with those funny papers."

Her position and cold expression remained the same. "You tend to your business, I'll tend to mine," she said.

I looked her up and down. My common sense should have told me that something was eating at her. But I was aware that for the first time in our acquaintance she was being nasty. Well, I could be nasty, too, and I put the paper between us, rattling it every once in awhile as I read to attract her attention to the fact that I wasn't paying any attention to her.

THERE was the usual news, only it was considerably worse than it had been a couple days ago. An oil company official had directed the firing of half a hundred oil wells in Texas. A student riot had broken out in Alabama, and the head of a university had been murdered. A union leader had ordered a nation-wide department store strike. The consuming power of the country was frozen stiff. The President of the United States had condoned the action of an ambassador who had admittedly insulted a foreign power, and heaped more insults when the foreign power demanded an apology. An international crisis was on the make.

The paper was full of such items. Looked at impersonally, one would suppose the world had gone mad, looney, nuts. I started to turn the depressing front page in, when I became aware of the waiter standing over my left shoulder.

"Are you dining alone, sir?" he said, looking at me strangely. Something in that look made me drop the paper in a flurry of unbelief. Susan's chair was

empty! I clattered to my feet. Susan was just disappearing out the door of the restaurant!

"Susan!" I yelled. I dashed after her. But when I got on the streets, she had lost herself in the crowds.

I was still walking around in a daze an hour later. Susan, the girl I'd never quarreled with, had suddenly turned into a full-fledged tornado of temper!

As dark came, I took a short-cut across the woods to my boarding house. I had a sudden sensation of uneasiness, as if somebody were near. Like a primitive organism, I took refuge behind the handiest object, a tall poplar. I peeped out. But there wasn't a thing to see—nothing except something that looked extraordinarily like a firefly magnified ten or twenty times, a pulsing dot of fiery white luminance creeping through the air at the height of a man's head. Abruptly, it rose vertically, then dropped almost to ground level. It spiraled up, swayed in a long arc back and forth, and like a shot rose and disappeared upward.

"A looney firefly," I thought to myself, and went home.

IN the morning, Professor Prestpsler edged through the door, his weak eyes glowing with excitement. He made "shh"ing motions at me, so, somewhat mystified I went to the door.

"Bob!" he said in a stage whisper, looking apprehensively toward Dean Tarrant's office. "Bob, you've got to help me. I saw the most beautiful creatures down the road, the most beautiful, graceful butterflies. A new species. I'm sure of it, Bob. They glow!"

I drew him hurriedly into the hall. "You're not supposed to chase butterflies any more," I pleaded. "If the dean—"

"I know, I know," he interrupted excitedly. "But this is different. A new

species! You've got to help me!"

"Like fun I will!" Then I stopped. Last night—was that a butterfly I had seen? In spite of myself, I began to feel a fatal curiosity. Prestpsler took advantage.

"I knew I could count on you," he exclaimed warmly. "Here's what I want you to do. Go up to my office and get the butterfly net from behind the bookcase and meet me just outside the campus where the road turns past the stadium."

He winked at me excitedly, and then turned hurriedly as he saw I was about to protest, and walked down the marble corridor.

FEELING as if Prestpsler had used a different kind of net on me, I got what he wanted and was off across the campus. But several of the students saw me and deluged me with catcalls.

"Why, if it isn't Professor Pretzel himself," they said.

I escaped, not without presentiments of doom, and went past the stadium to the road. I looked around for Prestpsler. His "Psst!" sounded, and he stuck his scraggly head out from behind a tree. His horny finger beckoned. A second later we were cutting through the woods, he trotting ahead with little mincing steps, parting shrubbery. Then he brought me up short. We were standing in a little clearing, and he was hopefully fitting his glasses over his thinnish nose. Disappointment showed on his face as he looked around.

"Oh, the beautiful creatures!" he exclaimed petulantly. "Now they're go— Wait!" He held up a warning finger. Suddenly his arm shot out and he whispered joyfully, "There!"

He ripped the net away from me and took large funny-paper steps toward the side of the clearing. I looked and

saw what certainly appeared to be a butterfly. It was see-sawing in the air slowly. There was a phosphorescent sort of haze about it. Its wings, if they were wings, were practically invisible. Well, that was a funny-looking butterfly!

Prestpsler crept up on it, in a kind of tense drama. Would the butterfly stay there? Or would it take a silly notion into its head to flit skyward?

The net swished around through a complete arc.

"Got it!" Prestpsler cried. He expertly twisted the net to enclose the insect. Then his head jerked up. I was certain the net had snagged the pulsing creature, but it was still suspended in the air.

In determination, Prestpsler swung again, and missed again. He looked somewhat bewildered. The insect darted from the clearing then. The next thing I knew I was running after the professor as he stumbled through the moldy humus of the forest.

For some ten minutes, the professor panted along ahead of me. I was so desperately afraid he'd follow the insect onto the campus road, that I entirely forgot the more obvious danger until we had burst from the forest onto South Field.

I halted, petrified. Prestpsler was dashing headlong across the field. Then I impelled myself across the Field, and grabbed his arm.

"You're on the South Field!" I snapped, panic-stricken. "In full view of the Dean's office!"

He glanced around toward me as if he were surprised that I existed. Then he shook off my arm irritably.

"Stop it. Stop it!" he cried. "There's something terribly wrong here. The creature escapes right through the net. And you dare to suggest that the solution to this mystery is worth less than

Edgemont's respectability? Stop it, I tell you!" and he was off again.

SO I stood and watched him grimly, while he dashed the length of the field and back again a half dozen times. It was true what he'd said about the butterfly, if butterfly it were. It wouldn't stay in the net, although I know that Prestpsler had it a half hundred times. It was peculiar, too, that the butterfly's antics were as curious as those of the professor. Butterflies are notoriously senseless, but this one topped them all. It hovered in the air, and then would go up and down in a vertical line while Prestpsler would vainly swipe. Then it would flit upward, and drop down again. Then a series of diagonal drops and rises, like a radio wave bouncing from the Heavyside layer. If Prestpsler looked crazy to the students—yes, there were a dozen watching students leaning against the fence by this time—the butterfly looked crazier.

Then I saw something I had been dreading to look for. Dean Tarrant! He had reached the fence and unlatched the gate and was striding across the field, rage in every movement of his body. Toward him full blast went Prestpsler, pursuing his erratic discovery. Too late he discovered Tarrant. He tried to put on the brakes. There was a collision and both fell in a scramble to the ground. I started toward the disturbance, sick at my stomach. Tarrant flounced to his feet, his trembling hands dusting off his clothes. I heard Prestpsler's scream.

"He's sitting on your neck!"

He leaped for Tarrant and practically climbed up the dean's stalwart figure and down the other side. I came up just in time to pick Prestpsler up and wait for the storm to break. One of the watching students let out a loud,

sudden guffaw of mirth, and then switched it off as Tarrant turned around, spluttering.

Then something seemed to happen to the dean. His face had been scarlet with rage and mortification, his body shaking. Suddenly that was gone, and he went rigid. His face turned hard and cold. I got one look at his eyes. They were narrowed, brittle with the cold ferocity of a ravening glacier. He took three steps toward the petrified students.

He whispered, "Who laughed?" When nobody answered he roared it out. But naturally, those students weren't going to snitch on each other. They looked at me hopefully, genuinely frightened by the dean's manner. But I gulped and guessed that this situation was out of my hands. The quiet-spoken, if at times sarcastic dean, was not to be found in the malevolent man who seemed to be taking his place. Privately, I knew the situation didn't call for this much temper.

"Very well," whispered Tarrant, and his lips curled up on one side—a half grin, half sneer. "I will suppose all of you who did not laugh as accomplices to him who did, and therefore will draw up immediate papers for expulsion." He waved one violent arm and roared, "All of you—expelled!"

Then I got into it. "But you can't, sir! Not just because—"

HE WHIRLED on me, transfixing me with sheer, uncalled-for malevolence. "Shut up, Harrington, or you'll get yourself mixed up in this. Apparently, you're an accomplice of Professor Prestpsler's. Be satisfied that I let you off easily." Then he made a slow turn of his head toward the cause of everything. Prestpsler was looking back at him, stooped a little, his eyes wide and fixed on the dean's forehead.

"It was there—then it wasn't," he whispered. Suddenly he straightened, and his mouth formed a round "O" of discovery. He took two steps toward the dean.

To my amazement, a look almost of fright grew in the dean's eyes. Then his arm came up and he pointed and said in a thin, sharp voice, "Professor Prestpsler, you will turn your class over to Professor Jung this afternoon. We'll have no butterfly chasers on this campus!"

Then he turned and marched through the gate and onto the commons. Something strange happened as all fourteen of us stared after him. Six students were waiting for him in a body. As he came up, they fell in behind him, almost in military formation, except that every other second or so one, for some reason or other fell out, turned a complete circle around the group, and then fell in again.

As they marched out of sight into the Administration Building, Prestpsler turned to me. He was grinning, a wide-mouthed, wolfish grin.

"Very strange, eh, Bob?" he whispered softly. "Very strange!" Then he jerked my head down to his and whispered, "Bob, you keep your job at the university and whatever happens don't lose it! Observe what happens! Edgemont will be a testing ground that will save the world! And come to dinner tonight and tell me what happened."

My face fell. I said dolefully, "I can't. Susan has given me the bum's rush." I told him about Susan.

He stared. "What? She wouldn't read the funny papers?" Then he waved his hand at me in disbelief. "Tosh! Young girls are all crazy—she'll get over it, I'm s—" Then he stopped. He frowned in speculation. "Crazy!" he muttered. "Crazy! Why certainly! Bob, this is more important

than I thought, and I must go and get my affairs cleared up. Perhaps—perhaps you'd better not come out to the house tonight after all. But mind you—let me know what goes on at the university!"

Then he trotted off, so excited about something that he left his butterfly net lying on the ground. I picked it up, and shaking my head, trudged toward the office.

NOTHING happened that afternoon, though, principally because I didn't see the dean. But in the morning, he entered the office, and threw down a list of names, and told me to draw up expulsion papers. I commenced to get hot under the collar, forgetting Prestpsler's instructions.

"You can't expel them simply because one of them laughed at you," I said heatedly. "The president of the university would laugh back at you."

Tarrant pursed his thin lips and studied me with narrowed eyes. "There'll be plenty of evidence against them and anybody else I choose to expel," he said tightly. He half turned toward the door, and Rod Williams, one of the football tackles, lounged in, grinning with one side of his mouth.

"Listen, Harrington," he said, "don't get tough. Do what the dean says."

I thought he was kidding. "You dumb fool," I snapped, "three of those students are on the football team!"

"So?" he said. "So? So?"

Dean Tarrant smiled nastily. "Rod Williams found those three students violating—ah—campus regulations."

"Ah—girls," said Rod, smirking. Then he scowled, lit a cigarette, stuck the match in his mouth, threw the cigarette away, pulled his hair down over his forehead, and stalked from the office.

Dean Tarrant said, "Attaboy!" and went into his own office, only to stick his head out a second later and say, "Wonderful weather we're having."

Something started crawling on my spine, and I must have turned pale as death. It was impossible! It was crazy! It was fact! I scooped up the phone with a shaking hand, and dialed Prestpsler.

Susan answered. "Whoever it is, I don't want to talk," she said.

"Susan," I quavered, "this is Bob."

"Hi, Boob," she said. "Sic."

"Sick?" I yelped, and a great light dawned on me. "Honey, I knew there was something wrong with you the minute you refused to read those funny papers—"

The receiver banged down. I dialed again, frantically. The phone rang and rang. Finally Prestpsler answered. I started jabbering.

He seemed surprised. "Well," he said, cautiously, "of course Susan isn't sick."

"She hung up on me!" I wailed.

Prestpsler sighed, and evidently decided it was nothing for him. He said, with sudden eagerness, "What happened?"

I told him.

His answering voice was shocked, but held satisfaction. "It tallies with the facts," he said dolefully. "My, but this is a most difficult situation, Bob. Did you read the papers this morning? Murders and mayhems and international violations and arson. I've never seen the like." His voice sharpened. "Now you stay there, Bob, you hear? In about a week, I think you and I are going to go butterfly chasing. We'll save the world!" he ended up jubilantly.

He hung up, and I stared at the receiver as if the world had just ended. We were going to go butterfly chasing—and save the world. . . .

I groaned, and with shaking fingers started to make out expulsion papers.

DURING the week that followed, the real plight of the world at large must have escaped me. I was too deep in troubles of my own. I had three telephone conversations with Susan, which ended disastrously. Apparently she had made up her mind we were through, washed up. And whenever I talked about it with Prestpsler, trying to get some clue to the difficulty, he evaded me by demanding how things were going at the university.

I told him of three professional resignations which Tarrant had demanded, with no apparent reason. And Tarrant had apparently neglected to find substitutes for those courses, with the result that three classes of students found themselves free to throw paper wads; pencils and erasers as they pleased. Furthermore, there was a group of six students, the same six, who were terrorizing more frailly built ones.

"Fine, fine," chortled Prestpsler. "An *excellent* testing ground, *most* excellent! Now, Bob, I feel that you had better come out to the house tonight and we'll lay our plans. My butterfly net is practically finished."

"Butterfly ne—" I yelped, but the exclamation dribbled away, and I said weakly, "What about Susan?"

"Susan? Susan? Oh," said Prestpsler casually, "*they* will come this afternoon to take her away. Now you be sure to drop into the house tonight, Bob!"

I was on my feet. "*They? They've* come to take her away?"

But Prestpsler had hung up. The receiver dropped from my hand and I felt as if I were going to faint. Suddenly I picked up my hat and ran for the door. I ran square into Rod Williams.

"Well!" he said. "Well!" He put his hammy fist against my chest and pushed once and I went slamming back against the wall. His jaw jutted out. "Stay where you are, little boy, or I shall tackle you."

He stooped, with an imaginary ball tucked against his chest, made some hopping motions, and then threw the imaginary ball through the window.

Dean Tarrant came in behind him. He saw me, spread-eagled against the wall. He shook his head, and made a "tsk" ing sound.

Rod Williams straightened, his eye on the ball, following its imaginary arc. He said, "Mr. Harrington was talking to Professor Prestpsler!"

Dean Tarrant turned slowly around, looking at me with pale, cold eyes. "The butterfly chaser! What did he say?"

HE TOOK one step toward me. So did Rod Williams. They lowered over me, and I would have considered myself senseless if I didn't see the threat in their faces. I huddled back against the wall, but my muscles tensed.

"None of your business," I said flatly.

Tarrant looked at Rod.

Tarrant said softly. "He's dangerous, isn't he? He and Prestpsler."

"Very dangerous," said Rod, still looking at me.

Suddenly he lunged forward, grabbed my arm and began to twist it, and his nastily grinning face leered into mine. I countered instinctively by knocking his extended left leg from under him, and clipping him across the right side of his neck with my left arm. He went through an arc and crashed on the floor and I fell on top of him. I wrenched free, stepped on his face and turned just in time to see Dean Tarrant come at me. I kicked him in the chest and he went back and I went out the

door.

Thirty minutes later, I was in Edgemont, the town outside the University, and Professor Prestpsler was letting me into the house.

"Where's Susan?" I panted, looking wildly around. Chaos met my eyes. Somebody had taken an axe to all the hall furniture—frightfully old period stuff that I knew Susan had never liked. Something caved in inside of me. Who were *they*?

Prestpsler looked concerned as I started to babble at him.

"*They* took Susan," he said. He waved his hand around vaguely at the damage. "I thought it best," he added hopefully. Then he saw that something had happened, and without further reference to Susan, pumped the story out of me.

He nodded his head, in satisfaction. "But I think perhaps we'd better act now. I'll wire the *Clarion* and ask them to send a reporter out for an exclusive story. It will be a real scoop for them—if my plan clears up the trouble at Edgemont, then later on it can be applied to the rest of the world."

He made his phone call, while I walked around the hall, vaguely touching the ruined furniture. Then he went downstairs, and came up carrying a long aluminum rod from which trailed an extension cord attached to a belt which he had looped right around his swallow tail coat. The belt was studded with a number of small batteries hooked in series.

Prestpsler patted the rod. "My butterfly net," he said proudly and then went for the door. We got into my coupe, and fifteen minutes later had picked up a dubious reporter from the *Clarion* offices.

"WHAT'S up?" said the reporter. "We're going to chase butter-

flies," I said hollowly.

"Oh? And where's the net?"

Prestpsler held up the rod and smiled brightly.

The reporter said, "Oh?" and edged ominously into a corner of the seat, watching us through narrowed eyes.

Prestpsler continued, his voice slightly reproving. "I confess I do not expect you to believe me, sir, but the fact remains that unbeknownst to its inhabitants, the planet Earth has suffered an invasion of other-wordly creatures. That invasion is now complete, but it will have a spreading effect. Now—ah—young man, tell me what you know of the latest news."

The reporter—Brad Stakes his name was—regarded him with the sickly smile of someone who's had a practical joke pulled on him. He said overpolitely.

"A few murders—arson—and they say the President has had a stroke and is confined to his room."

"Hah!" said Prestpsler. "A stroke! Fine! Wonderful! So he's confined—well!"

Stakes said acidly, "That's a hell of a thing to get happy about. Say, would you mind letting me in on this?"

Prestpsler said with some heat, "I just did. The president's condition, and indeed all his inexplicable actions and those of other people the world over, is a direct result of this invasion from space! Now, young man, since you apparently don't believe me, we shall wait until I can show some definite proof. Faster, please, Bob!"

I stepped up the speed, although I was afraid my nerves were so bad I'd run the car off the road. I couldn't get my mind off Susan, and who *they* were, and where *they* had taken her.

I drove the car up to the side of the Administration Building and got out shakily. The other two joined me.

Stakes' big jaw was pugnacious and grim. I could tell he was just waiting for the joke to break.

Prestpsler took a few bird-like glances from side to side. The campus was quiet, only a few students out of classes. Prestpsler minced forward onto the path, waving us after him imperatively.

WE stood on the path, facing the steps of the Administration Building. Then I stiffened. I pointed and quavered, "There! Coming out of the Administration Building."

Brad Stakes squinted through cynical eyes. "So?" he growled. "A half dozen students—"

Prestpsler let out a strangled squawk. "Here they come! They're after us! At them, Bob, at them!"

Waving his aluminum rod over his head, he dashed straight for the six students hurrying grimly toward us down the walk.

I grabbed Stakes' arm. He heaved a bitter sigh, started after me dubiously, with a lumbering trot that soon turned into a full-fledged gallop as he made up his mind that maybe we knew what we were about. I didn't. I was scared stiff and I was afraid we were running into the face of another mass murder.

A strange thing happened. As the six students, Rod Williams in the lead, converged on Prestpsler, he held the rod straight out in front of him. They stopped abruptly. One or two dropped back, with looks of stunned fear.

Prestpsler's shrill laugh sounded as we came up. "They're afraid! Grab one, Bob! Just one!"

"Come on, Stakes," I muttered. I dove headlong at a pair of legs. The student crashed. Stakes got hold of another one and pinned his arms behind his back.

"Hold 'em," cried the professor. He

stepped up to Stakes' man. But I was so busy holding mine, I didn't see what happened. I heard a brief popping explosion. Then Prestpsler stood over my struggling, terrified captive. He swished the rod so that it missed the student's nose by a quarter of an inch. The student let out a long sigh and his eyes closed and he went limp.

I jumped to my feet just in time to hear the same tiny explosion. Prestpsler's eyes sparkled with elation.

"Did you see it? It works! Now for the rest of them!"

The rest of them were dashing back into the Administration Building. Prestpsler took off, yelling for us to follow. He charged into the building and we were clattering down the marble corridor toward the dean's office. The door was closed. We heard a swift flurry of panic-stricken voices. Brad Stakes gave the professor one inscrutable look and put his shoulder against the door.

He said "Ugh!" and the door caved in.

DEAN TARRANT was standing there, his five stalwarts behind him. He had a gun in his hand, a blend of malevolence and sheer terror shining from his eyes. I threw myself through the air before I had time to think. The gun spoke. Tarrant came down on top of me. Prestpsler surged forward with a yell. While I held the wildly threshing dean, I heard his "net" swish back and forth a half dozen times. I heard the same popping sounds five times. Then Prestpsler's charged voice, "Hold him, Bob!"

He stooped over Tarrant, his eyes alight with savage fire. Tarrant cringed and struggled all the harder. But Prestpsler swung the rod. As Tarrant saw it coming, his eyes distended and his mouth opened to emit a great, spine-

tingling roar. The rod swept past his nose. Tarrant slumped writhed a bit, and his head dropped back. I got shakily to my feet.

Brad Stakes' broad face had gone gray. He stared at the tip of the rod. "What in—" he whispered.

Prestpsler panted, "It was in the dean's head. A butterfly. One of the invaders. A creature made of electricity held together by some highly evolved life principle!" With a sort of sadism, he watched the glowing "butterfly" moving crazily around at the tip of the rod, apparently attempting to escape from an invisible trap. I saw now that it didn't really have wings. The brilliant haze around it could have contributed to the illusion that it did.

Brad Stakes pulled himself together slowly. He hauled out a notebook and pencil and commenced to scribble. "Invaders from space—creatures of electricity—not impeded by material substance—" His writing hand went faster and faster. When he looked up, his cheeks were flushed. "I get it," he said jerkily. "The president — the murders—the unbelievable things that have been happening all over the world—an invasion from space. Holy Cow, I've got a story. Professor invents electrical net to catch electrical butterfly — which melts through victim's skull, controlling his moods, his actions, his whole personality—electric net is a sort of hemispherical force field which you run through victim's head and drag out the butterfly. The frequency of the net is shorter than the electrical frequency of the invaders, therefor they can't escape. Is that it?"

"Approximately," said Prestpsler cautiously. "Yes' write it up like that. Then another operation of the—ah—net completes the sphere and the creature is trapped. An interfering vibration is set up in the trap, then, and

the creature is canceled out. Like this."

He pressed a button midway up the rod. The pulsing creature suddenly swelled to twice its size and exploded with a burst of light.

"Swell! Man, this will burn up the headlines. But professor," said Stakes, with a dawning light in his eyes, "if you, or somebody, could drag a butterfly out of the President's head, you could convince him to manufacture more of those rods—you could wipe the invaders out. Say, I have to make the next edition!"

HE stuffed his pad in his pocket and and took the professor's arm and hustled him out. I took one look at the dean and the five students. They were commencing to stir and mumble. I felt something squirming in my stomach and I fled, afraid I was going to be sick. We got in the car and started toward Edgemont. I was sick anyway. Sick with fear for Susan, of what had happened to her, but lacking the courage to ask Prestpsler.

Prestpsler explained while I drove. "It tallies most beautifully. The brain is electrical in nature. When at rest, it has a steady electrical beat which can be registered on sensitive instruments—the alpha vibrations, they are called. The beta, more unsteady vibrations, are given off when the brain is working. There are also the delta vibrations. These are the fundamental, normal vibrations of the brain."

"Fundamental r h y t h m s , ' ' said Stakes. "Go on!"

Prestpsler's veined hands rubbed together in satisfaction. "The important part is that there are any number of rhythms each of which corresponds to certain brain diseases. Sometimes diagnoses can be made on that basis. A certain rhythm means a certain type

of insanity. So all these creatures had to do was to pulsate a certain rhythm which was identical to that of a mental disease. Therefore — ” he grinned wolfishly, enjoying the effect of that statement on the reporter “—in the case of Dean Tarrant and thousands of others, it was the rhythm which caused the disease, not the other way around—homicidal mania, for instance.”

Brad Stakes said softly, “Holy Cow!”

A grin tugged at Prestpsler’s lips. “I imagine,” he said, “that Dean Tarrant will hardly object to my adding to my butterfly collection after this.”

I broke in finally. “Professor, about Sus—”

Quick sympathy showed in his eyes. “It’s all right. I merely sent her out to the county jail. She was—ah—well, I thought it best.” He stopped hopelessly.

I put the brakes on with a savage motion. “Professor, let me have that net and belt. Stakes, you drive—the county jail, quick!”

While I was feverishly buckling on the belt, Brad Stakes scribbled. What was their idea? To wipe the human race out, to conquer the world, or just to have fun?”

Prestpsler rubbed slowly at his stubbled chin. He raised his eyes, as if to guess from what unreachable distance the energy creatures had come. He sighed. “No, it wasn’t any of those. The creatures were highly evolved forms of life, but they seemed far more senseless even than butterflies. I must,

I can draw only one conclusion. They themselves were — insane. Yes,” he whispered sadly, “Absolutely, plumb crazy. . . .”

BRAD STAKES stopped the car at the county jail. I got out. The car roared away again. Stakes had his plans all made. The printing of the story would be the first step in a campaign to have thousands more of the nets made, to begin the process of wiping out the invaders altogether. But I wasn’t thinking of that. I was thinking of Susan. And as the jail keeper walked away down the corridor, keys jingling, Susan stood in the cell looking at me, eyes sparking malevolently.

“Well!” she said. “If it isn’t the Katzenjammer Kids and the Little Hitchhiker! Nov shmoz ka pop?”

“Nov shmoz ka pop,” I agreed. Then I pressed the stud of the aluminum rod, brought it over my head and ran the electric net through her head.

Out came a madly pulsing electrical butterfly. I pressed another stud and trapped it. Then I vengefully exploded it.

I jumped forward just in time and caught Susan and held her in my arms. I was shaking and sweating. But it was a relief to see her unconscious features relaxed and back to normal again. Five minutes later her eyes opened, and she looked around the dingy cell. And I could tell from her expression that she was wondering what on Earth I’d done now that they should put me in a place like this!

« INDIAN LIE DETECTOR »

AMONG many of the tribes of India were the terms “milliampere,” “blood pressure,” and “galvanometer” are as unknown as Greek is to most of us, there is in use a form of lie detector based on the soundest of psychological principles. A suspected thief is given dry rice to chew. If he can chew and swallow the rice without too much

trouble, he is considered innocent. But if he’s unable to swallow the rice, he’s considered a likely suspect. The Indians reason that a normal unexcited human will have little trouble eating. Under the burden of anxiety and fear, however, the same man will lack the necessary saliva for swallowing.—*Arthur Sherwood Wolters.*

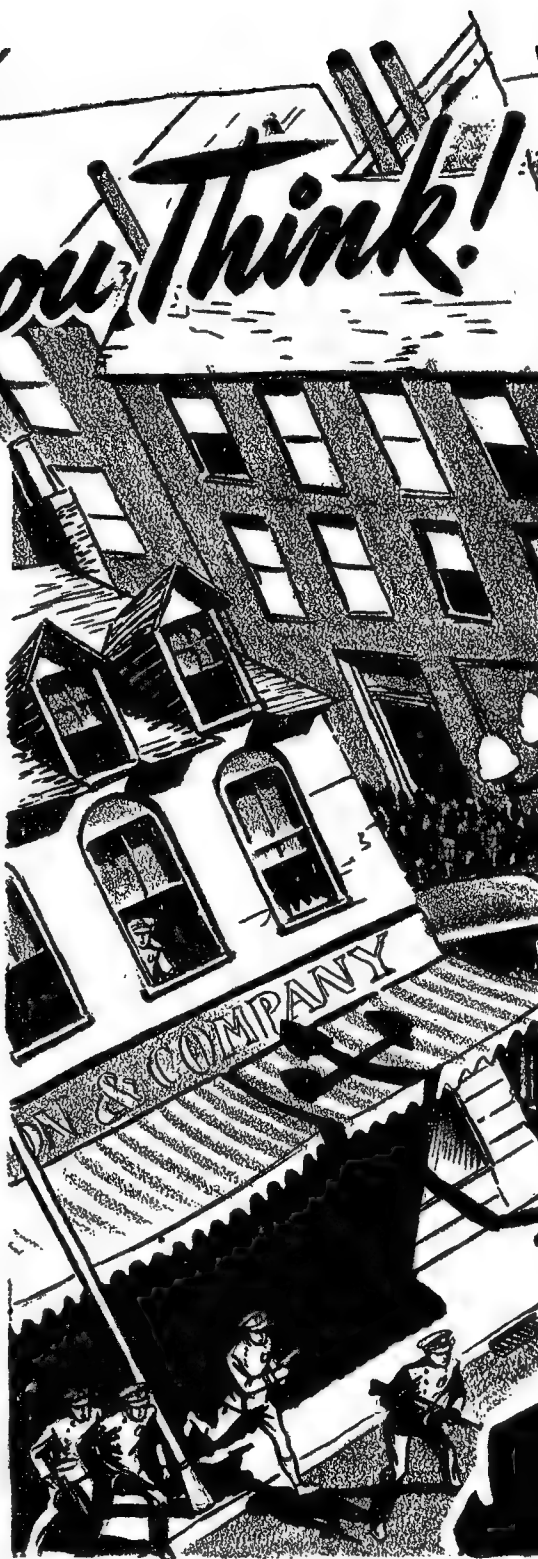
Later than you Think!

by Henry Kuttner

Johnny Drake's radio was a bit odd. It picked up the following day's broadcasts

JOHNNY DRAKE had his back to the wall. He always fought best that way. And, just now, the odds were heavy enough to bring a grim little smile to his lips. There was no way out of the flooded subway, of course, and his opponents—well, there were six of them, including a mad killer, several foreign agents, two frozen-faced gunsels, and a shadowy, Oriental figure who might be Fu Manchu himself. Most of the attackers had guns, but there was also a sword in evidence, and Fu Manchu had a flame-thrower. "Okay, rats," said Johnny Drake. "You asked for it."

However, he did not fire. One of the menacing figures had become far more ominous than the others. In fact, the others dissolved back to the dream-world whence they had come. Fu Manchu and his flame-gun were off to pester Nayland Smith. Nothing remained—





Johnny Drake sat spellbound as the incredible news came over the radio

not even the flooded subway.

Well, Mr. Gensler remained, a fat, gopher-faced man who had sneaked up quietly behind Johnny and was peering over the young man's shoulder at the true-crime magazine lying open on the counter. Mr. Gensler's approach was not exactly unheralded. For some fantastic reason, he always smelled strongly of rhubarb.

Forewarned, Johnny glanced furtively around the music store, to make sure no fugitive wisps of his day-dream were visible, and then began frantically to scrabble among stacks of phonograph records, in a futile endeavor to conceal the magazine beneath them. It was hard, he thought, that he, a young man of twenty-two, could find no other place in the sun than a clerkship in Gensler's Music Shop. A year ago the prospect of a steady salary had been exhilarating. Johnny hadn't known Gensler then.

The rhubarb aura became more overpowering. Nervously Johnny fumbled at the records, and a high-priced album slipped from his hands and crashed down to the floor. Wincing at the thought of \$6.50 being deducted from his salary, Johnny stooped to recover the remnants, and, in rising, met the pallid, baleful stare of Mr. Gensler.

Johnny repressed an impulse to dive under the counter.

To his astonishment, an abrupt change came over Gensler's repulsive features. The man was actually smiling. At a customer, Johnny realized.

"Good evening, Miss Moffatt," Gensler said. "A new record today?"

Johnny rose, slightly disheveled, as a pleasant voice responded. "I think so. There's a new Bing Crosby disc out—"

"Of course! Mr. Drake will take care of you." And Gensler turned to

the back office.

"Hello, darling," Miss Moffatt said, *sotto voce*.

"Oh, honey! You look wonderful!" Johnny seemed on the verge of vaulting the counter, and the girl retreated hastily. She was pretty enough, in a soft, pink way — sweet rather than swing. Her name was Dinah. Perhaps Johnny was mistaken in thinking it the most beautiful name in the world. Who can say?

They retreated to a small, glass-doored cubicle, where Johnny deftly slipped a record on the phonograph. Under cover of the music, he made several remarks, pertaining chiefly to Dinah's virtues, visible and invisible. "I want to kiss you," he added fervently.

"Oh, dear! Not now, Johnny. Gensler's looking. Do you think I should come here every night? You might get fired."

"I almost wish I would get fired," Johnny said, looking morose. "We can't get married on the dough he pays me."

"Well, I've a job," Dinah told him practically.

"But I want to *support* you," Johnny said.

"Oh, you're so stupid!" Dinah murmured, and added, "But you're a chivalrous darling. And I love you."

There was little time for more. Even in the cubicle, the vague scent of rhubarb was an ominous reminder of Gensler. Johnny said, "I'll meet you tonight. In the park. Same time." And, presently, Dinah was on her way, carrying the Crosby record under one pink, delectable arm.

GENSLER stared after her. "Steady customer, anyway. Well, close the shop. I'm leaving." He had already donned his overcoat, and marched like

a panzer division to the door, where he whirled and glared at Johnny. "The cost of those broken records comes out of your salary," he said, and seemed slightly cheered by the thought. Thinking bad thoughts, he left. . . .

Johnny sighed. It was a hard life, but, if he could afford to marry Dinah he'd be happy regardless. Sadly he went about the business of closing the shop, clicking off switches and drawing the blinds. Then he found a duster and lovingly removed invisible notes from the various radio cabinets. Radio was Johnny's third great love. Crime was another — but Dinah's name, of course, led all the rest.

He glanced at his wrist-watch. Five o'clock. Well, he really wasn't hungry. If he went without dinner, he could spend at least two hours downstairs, tinkering with his homemade radio, built of spare parts he had purchased from the penurious Gensler, who had been careful to add the sales tax. Besides, with the fifty cents saved, he could, in lieu of dinner, buy Dinah a corsage.

So Johnny went downstairs, to his destiny.

He was a pleasantly ugly little chap, with a snub nose and mild blue eyes. Those eyes were the tip-off on Johnny. A more harmless man never existed. He had never been in a fight in his life—he didn't think he was cowardly, but, somehow, fights had always passed him by. Real ones, that is.

If Johnny's day-dreams had ever materialized, his ugly little housekeeping room would have been a foot deep in the blood of spies, killers, mad doctors, and similar ruthless gentry. Also, he would have carried a G-man's badge. For Johnny's passion was crime, and everything that pertained to it. He would trudge miles to look at any spot marked X—not because he was morbid,

but because first-hand knowledge added verisimilitude to his dreams, in which Johnny Drake, remorseless, fighting in the cause of justice and humanity, faced snarling human rats and mowed 'em down.

But Johnny was also a tinkerer. The results of that tinkering were in the basement beneath the store, a home-made radio. It was originally constructed with some vague idea of picking up inaudible sound waves, or else signals from Mars — Johnny wasn't quite sure. His technical knowledge was pretty sketchy. At any rate, the radio ought to get local stations, if everything else failed.

HE switched on the basement light and went to work, humming happily under his breath. When he knifed a switch, there was a small, startled shriek from the recesses of the radio, and the sound of a rather insignificant object thrashing about in tiny frenzy. Johnny investigated, to discover a gray mouse which had been building a nest among the tubes and wires.

For one startled second, he thought he had achieved the wireless transmission of matter. Then he forgot it, in the difficult task of rescuing the mouse. By the time the horrified little creature had been safely deposited behind a pile of rubbish, the interior of the radio was a chaos.

Two weeks' work spoiled! Johnny groaned, and, in a rare fit of fury, kicked the cabinet. A sepulchral voice said, "—bring to an end Uncle Billy's Hour, and now you now why rabbits eat lettuce. We'll see you again tomorrow, kiddies."

Johnny paused. This was the first sound that had come out of the radio, exclusive of the mouse's frantic shriek of terror. He listened.

"This is station WAZ, the voice of

Glencoe. When you hear the musical note, it will be exactly five-fifteen." *Tink.* "And now a quarter hour of Swing with Simon."

WAZ. That was the local station. Oh, well. Johnny reached for the dial, and halted abruptly at a new voice.

"Flash! We bring you a special bulletin! Handsome Gallegher, the outlaw, whose career has topped Dillinger's, has just been captured by government agents! Tracing Gallegher's movements, the G-men broke into a rooming-house on the corner of Fifth and Flower, and found their quarry on the top story, where he had been in hiding for days, together with three of his fellow gangsters. After a dramatic gun-battle, Gallegher tried to escape by the window, and fell to death four floors below. The criminals had been holding captive an unidentified young man, who was found unconscious, but otherwise unharmed. Police state—"

Johnny's eyes gleamed. He switched off the radio, fled upstairs, and within three seconds was racing along the street, overcoat flapping about his calves. What luck!

The career of Gallegher, of course, Johnny had followed, in all the papers. More than once he himself had come face to face with that snaky-eyed, tight-lipped killer, and always, in those pleasant dreams, Johnny had been victorious. Reeling back from the impact of a bullet crashing through his shoulder, he had snapped up his vicious little automatic and. . . .

But this wasn't a dream. Johnny knew where that rooming-house was. And, if he hurried, he might get there in time to see the G-men—or even Gallegher's body!

There was the building, a dilapidated structure on the corner. Johnny's heart sank. The street was deserted.

No trace of Gallegher, G-men, or bystanders remained.

Nevertheless, Johnny pushed open a creaky door and found himself in a dark hallway smelling of onions. He hesitated a moment, and then mounted stairs. The top floor, the radio announcer had said.

ON the top floor, a squat, white-faced man with haggard eyes was leaning against the balustrade, twitching nervously. Johnny said, "Hello, there! All the excitement's over, I guess."

The white-faced man scratched himself under his coat, and forgot to take his hand out. "Looking for somebody, bud?" he inquired gently.

"Where's Gallegher's body?" Johnny asked hopefully.

The other shot a swift glance down the stairs. His mouth was twitching.

"What?"

"Did they take him to the morgue yet?"

The squat man swallowed convulsively. His hand appeared, with a gun in it.

Johnny smiled. "You a G-man?"

"No," snarled the other, suddenly recovering his voice. "I ain't a G-man! And I ain't playing games, either. Who the hell are you?"

Johnny had no time to answer. A door opened, and a low voice asked some inaudible question. The squat man said, "See if you can figure it out, Handsome," and simultaneously seized Johnny by the collar and threw him across the threshold.

The lights were blinding. All the shades were pulled down. The air was thick with cigarette-smoke and whiskey. There were several men who had arisen tensely at Johnny's sudden appearance, but he had eyes for only one—a snaky-eyed, tight-lipped fellow who was—

Who was Handsome Gallegher, in the flesh.

"Look," said the squat man. "This mug comes upstairs and starts asking for you. I don't know him, see? He asks me if I'm a G-man."

Johnny saw no reason to rise from his sitting position. "It—it's a mistake!" he gasped. "There was a radio flash—it said you were killed—"

Gallegher's face didn't change. He jerked his head, and three of the men vanished from the room, while another went hurriedly to the window and peered out through a corner of the blind. For perhaps five minutes the tableau held, Gallegher looking down impassively at the horrified Johnny.

At last the henchmen came back. "All clear," one of them reported. "This guy came in alone."

"Okay," Gallegher said softly. "Now suppose you talk."

BUT Johnny found it difficult to make explanations, especially since he didn't know the answers himself. He kept going back to that radio announcement—an announcement that couldn't possibly have been made, under the existing circumstances.

"What's he talking about, Bundy?" Gallegher asked of a small, mild-faced man who wore pince-nez. He looked incongruous among the killers.

"Blamed if I know," Bundy shrugged. "For my money, he's nuts."

Gallegher's eyes hooded. "Think we better—you know?"

The other shook his head. "Better not. Not yet, anyhow. Tie him up for a while."

Johnny squeaked faintly. He was feeling far from well. The foundations of the known universe seemed to have collapsed about his shrinking head. That impossible radio announcement—

Gallegher gave a snort of impatience

and lifted Johnny by his shirt-front. "Listen! Who sent you here, bud? Was it Spider?"

"N-no! That radio—"

Gallegher hurled Johnny into a chair. "Tie him up," he snapped, and fell to pacing the floor, nervously puffing at a cigarette. At last he swung toward Bundy.

"I've gotta get out of here. This place is driving me nuts. Why can't you fix up a getaway for me? A smart mouthpiece like you—"

Bundy fiddled with his pince-nez. "I haven't steered you wrong yet, have I?"

"I don't know," Gallegher said slowly. "I've let you run this business—and now look at the spot I'm in."

Johnny stared at Bundy. So the little shyster was the master-mind of the gang! He remembered, now, that Bundy was a notorious criminal, a ruthless killer who was wanted in several states. But he had never been connected with Gallegher.

By this time Johnny was bound securely to his chair and shoved back into a corner. The others began to play poker, except for Bundy, and one man who stood at the window, peering out. Johnny managed to glance at his watch. He would be unable to keep his date with Dinah.

In fact, he might never see Dinah again. Johnny felt centipedes on his spine. He shut his eyes and tried to think. That radio—

Then his eyes snapped open, a look of incredulous understanding in them. This was Wednesday night. Uncle Billy's Hour went on the air Thursday night! And so did Swing with Simon!

But—holy jumping catfish! How could the broadcasting company have made such a boner?

Johnny began to sweat. His repairs on the radio, complicated by the mouse, had resulted in something ob-

viously impossible. But it was the only conceivable solution.

That radio had been tuned in on—*tomorrow!*

Johnny fainted.

HE woke in a dark and airless place, smelling of overshoes. Presently the overshoes and the lack of air became too much for him and he passed out again.

Consequently he missed the exciting events which occurred about twenty-three hours later. At four-thirty Thursday afternoon government agents broke into the old rooming-house and fought a blazing gun-battle with Gallegher and his henchmen. Gallegher tried to escape by the window and fell to death four floors below. The criminals had been holding captive an unidentified young man, found unconscious but otherwise unharmed. . . .

Revived by cold water and brandy, the unidentified young man woke up and said his name was Johnny Drake. His first statement was greeted with such suspicion that he abruptly changed it. He had blundered into the gangsters' hideout, he said, and had been made a prisoner. That sounded much more likely to his listeners.

Then Johnny phoned Dinah, and soon afterward was in her apartment, gorging himself on steak and French fries. Dinah was greatly distressed, and sat on Johnny's lap while he ate.

"I thought you didn't love me any more, darling. I waited in the park for hours, and a horrid man spoke to me—"

"Oh, honey," said Johnny, and stopped eating temporarily. It was quite awhile before a sudden memory interrupted proceedings.

"Oh-oh," he said, glancing at his watch. "Nearly a quarter after five." He reached out for Dinah's small radio and turned it to WAZ. His mouth full

of steak, he listened with a half-incredulous hope.

Uncle Billy was just ending his informal chat with the kiddies. Johnny recognized the signature. His eyes gleamed as the radio went on:

"This is station WAZ, the voice of Glencoe. . . ." Exactly as he remembered it from last night! ". . . a quarter hour of Swing with Simon." Then— "Flash! We bring you a special bulletin! Handsome Gallegher, the outlaw, whose career has topped Dillinger's, has just been captured by government agents . . . found their quarry on the top story . . . fell to death . . . an unidentified young man, who was found unconscious. . . ."

"What is it, darling?" Dinah asked.

Johnny gulped. "N-nothing, I guess. Only—listen!"

The voice continued: "We have just received word that the man held prisoner by the Gallegher gang is John Drake, clerk in a local music store. His story—"

"Johnny!" Dinah gasped. "That was you!"

"Sure . . . Sure." But Johnny really wasn't listening. He kissed Dinah firmly. "Honey, I think we're going to town from now on. You can quit your job—we can get married—we'll be rich—"

"Oh, honey," Dinah said impractically. "You're crazy, but I love you."

HALF an hour later Johnny was unlocking the front door of Gensler's Music Shop. He could scarcely wait to get his hands on the radio and assure himself that he wasn't dreaming. But the set still sat quietly in the basement, an intricate tangle of wires surrounding it. Johnny's hands were trembling as he clicked the switch and listened to the growing hum of power through the tubes.

Music came, low and sweet. That might mean anything. Johnny twirled the dial, but blank silence was the only response. Apparently the set could tune in on only one station and that a local one. He turned back to WAZ.

Camptown Races was being played. Johnny scurried upstairs, found a weekly radio program, and thumbed to the page he wanted. Presently he read: WAZ—6:00—Stephen Foster Melodies. And that was scheduled for Friday night.

Tonight was Thursday.

He scanned the pages feverishly. WAZ—6:15—The Whozit Quiz. He glanced at his watch. Five minutes to wait.

At 6:15 the radio announced the Whozit Quiz.

"Jeepers!" Johnny gasped, finding it oddly difficult to believe. "I'm tuned in on tomorrow!"

"That's swell," said a familiar voice from the gloom of the staircase. "Lucky for me I always play my hunches."

Johnny turned in time to see a slim, top-coated figure move slowly toward him — a mild-faced little man who wore pince-nez. He said tonelessly, "Bundy."

"Why, sure," the shyster criminal smiled. "I wasn't with Gallagher when the G-men walked in. I had a hunch—" He waved toward a chair. "Sit down, bud. We're going to have a talk."

Johnny sank down, wetting his lips. "You're going to k-kill me? So I won't talk?"

"Relax," Bundy said pleasantly. "You're not going to be hurt. Not if that gadget of yours is as wonderful as I think it is. Now look." He sat down facing Johnny, and put one hand confidently on the young man's knee. "I'm not one of these guys who don't take stock in science. And when you

busted in last night and started talking about your radio, I had a hunch. It was screwy, sure. But you knew Gallagher was in that hideout—and how could you know that?"

Johnny silently pointed to the radio. "Uh-huh. Now you might have got a tip-off somewhere, but you couldn't know Gallagher would jump out the window when the cops closed in. So I just took a powder and waited to see what would happen."

"You knew—I mean you left your pals there to be killed—"

Bundy smiled. "They were getting to be a nuisance. They were too hot. So I used 'em for guinea pigs. And it worked. Now I figure you've got something in that screwy radio of yours—and I want the dope."

"Well—" Johnny said.

HE TALKED. Bundy listened, and also cocked an ear to the radio. It was not until seven o'clock that he was convinced. That was when Kate Smith came on, a day ahead of time.

"How the hell does it work?" Bundy asked.

"I don't know," Johnny said. "It was just a lucky accident. I couldn't do it again—I wouldn't know how."

"Well, don't go fooling around with the connections!" Bundy's voice was sharp. "You've got a gold mine there!"

"If I could only figure out the theory," Johnny mumbled. "The way I see it—well, space is curved, Einstein says."

"Oh, Einstein!"

"Yeah . . . A wave-impulse would eventually get back to its starting place. But it'd take billions of light-years. It'd have to travel around the entire universe. And this set receives programs sent out twenty-four hours in the future. Maybe — well, Einstein says time is a dimension, doesn't he?"

"Why not?" Bundy remarked.

"Maybe time is curved too. And the radio waves make a full circle in time and keep going. They reach their starting point and then continue backwards in time."

"The music goes round and round," Bundy said. "And it comes out *here*. That's the real point. Fair enough. I don't understand the thing, and I bet you don't either. But it doesn't matter. We've got this radio, and it's tuned in on tomorrow. So we're going in partnership."

Johnny gulped. "Look, Mr. Bundy —"

"Shut up. I'm thinking . . . I could take the radio with me, but I'm afraid to touch it. It's set up just right now. And if we broke a connection—ouch! No, you'd better keep it right here. I move around a lot, anyway, and I couldn't pack the thing with me. The cops would never get any ideas about you."

Johnny felt vaguely insulted. "The radio's mine!"

"And you're too much of a sap to use it. What's the set-up here?" You work in this place? Got a key, haven't you?"

There were explanations. Bundy nodded. "I don't need a key to get into this rattletrap store—I used a pick-lock tonight. But you'd better have a duplicate key made for me, anyway. From now on, we're partners."

The radio said, "We bring you the latest news bulletins." Bundy whipped out pencil and paper. "Listen!" he said.

THERE wasn't much news. But Bundy jotted down a few entries. White Star, an outsider, had won a big purse at Saratoga. A family named Brokaw had been killed in an auto accident. . . .

"Fair enough," Bundy said, pocketing the paper. "See the idea."

"You're going to place a bet on White Star?"

"Sure. And he'll win tomorrow, won't he?"

"Well—"

"We'll see," Bundy said confidently. "And this guy Brokaw—I'm going to look him up and take out an accident insurance policy on him. See?"

"But—" Johnny felt sick. There was something very nasty indeed in this ghoulish business. It was almost like murder.

Bundy said, "We'll clean up. Now listen. I'll give you a phone number, and you can call me whenever your boss is out. We'll listen in on that goldmine—" He nodded toward the radio — "and find out what's going to happen. But—don't get any funny ideas. Because if I find any cops waiting for me here, it'd be just too bad for you. I've got friends who'll do jobs for me—any sort of jobs." The pale eyes glittered behind the pince-nez.

Johnny nodded weakly. "Okay. But—I'd rather not—"

"If you'd rather be dead—" Bundy chuckled and took a deck of cards from his pocket. "We'll be here till midnight, anyway. There'll be more news coming in. What'll it be—blackjack or stud?"

"Stud, I guess." Johnny watched dazedly as Bundy removed his topcoat, hung it on a convenient hook, and drew up a small packing-box.

The radio said, "Here comes Ben Bernie!"

Johnny felt sick.

WEEKS passed. Johnny was utterly miserable. His life had become one of furtive terror. Suppose Gensler found out? Suppose the police got on the trail? Suppose—a million

things.

Bundy thrived. He was sporting diamonds now, as he took advantage of every important news item. And he kept Johnny's nose to the grindstone, making him spend his nights chained to the radio. Johnny almost came to hate the device.

As for Dinah—she didn't say much, but she was hurt, because Johnny neglected her. Explanations were impossible, and apologies were useless. Dinah didn't argue, but her eyes were often pink.

Johnny felt like murdering Bundy. The man was a killer, ruthless and vicious. When the radio announced the secret arrival of a fortune in diamonds, delivered from Amsterdam to the city's chief jewelry shop, Bundy smiled. The next day a truck was held up, its driver killed, and the diamonds stolen.

"I don't see it," Johnny said. "We heard Station WAZ announce that the diamonds arrived safely. But they haven't arrived. You stole them today."

Bundy laid down a tray. "One for me . . . You're wrong. That radio never makes a mistake. I've got the message here." He fished out an envelope. "I'm not saying I got those diamonds, of course, but . . . here's the announcement. Quote. 'The Franzen Jewelry Company today told a reporter that they expected a secret shipment of diamonds from Amsterdam. 'By this time' Mr. Franzen said at his home, 'they should have arrived safely, so I can safely reveal the information.' Unquote."

"But—"

"Come on upstairs." Bundy led the way to the back office and fiddled with a radio there. He got WAZ immediately. "Here's what we heard last night. Just about this time."

There were the usual news announce-

ments, which they had heard before. Then—"The Franzen Jewelry Company today told a reporter—"

In the gloom they waited silently, but the announcement was identical in every respect. "See?" Bundy said. "You can't change the future. Let's go down. We might be spotted here."

At midnight Bundy threw down his cards and went to get his overcoat. "I'm flying to Florida for a few days," he said. "Be good while I'm gone. And keep records of the news."

"Sure," Johnny said dully. "Sure. . . ."

THE next day brought catastrophe.

Gensler, in a malignant cloud of rhubarb, told Johnny to clean out the cellar. "And get that home-made radio of yours out," he snapped. "It's using up too much electricity."

"B—but I pay you for that—"

"Don't argue," Gensler requested. "Just take it away."

Johnny felt his stomach nosedive. "Look, Mr. Gensler," he said desperately. "I've got it connected just right now. I can't duplicate those connections at home. If I take the radio out, I'll ruin it!"

"Good!" said Gensler. "Then perhaps you'll pay more attention to the business."

All that day Johnny walked about in a daze. He thought of wiring Bundy, but he didn't know where in Florida the man was. He knew Bundy would blame him for the dismantling of the radio. And Johnny felt quite certain he couldn't connect the set a second time to get tomorrow's broadcasts.

Hoping against hope, that night he listened to every newscast. There was only one that might help. The finals in the Indianapolis Speedway were being run, and Number Seven had taken prize money. Number Seven.

Johnny spent a sleepless night. The next day he was late to work. He had managed to raise three hundred dollars, by putting himself in debt for the next three hundred years.

Gensler was furious. "Loan companies phoning me all morning! Good God, Drake, what are you up to?"

"I want to buy the store," Johnny said.

"Buy the—*what?* You're crazy."

"Look. How much would you take for the business?"

Gensler told him.

"Well, suppose I give you six hundred dollars tomorrow, for an option, and the rest in—uh—thirty days."

"You can't get the rest in thirty days," Gensler said. "And I certainly won't return that six hundred."

Greed ultimately triumphed, and Johnny got his option. Time passed. Bundy did not return. The thirty days raced on toward their ruinous close. And Johnny haunted the radio.

ALMOST too late, the Santa Anita reports came in. Johnny had no capital. He begged, borrowed, and scrimped, laying dollar bets here, five dollar wagers there. He bet on baseball, regattas, golf, tennis, boxing, wrestling, and the annual frog-jumping contest in Calaveras. And, of course, he invariably won. But even by pyramiding his winnings, the total take mounted with horrifying slowness.

Yet Johnny came out on top, with a narrow margin to spare. He paid Gensler in full, took a bill of sale, and relaxed, safe for a time. Safe? Ha!

A few months ago, the thought of owning the music store would have been pure ecstasy. It meant nothing now. For he did not dare marry Dinah—it would mean making her a bride and a prospective widow at the same time. And—

"Johnny," Dinah said once. "Tell me the truth. I won't mind. Do you want to break off our engagement?"

Under the impact of that, poor Johnny's heart quivered convulsively and almost broke.

Then Bundy got back from Florida, bronzed, smiling, and full of plans for the future. He was delighted to hear that Johnny now owned the store.

"I should have thought of that before," he said. "I'd have bought it for you. It'll be a lot easier now that Gensler's out of the way."

"Sure," Johnny said listlessly. "Listen, why don't you let me give you the store and the radio? I want to get out of this racket."

"Sorry. You're too good a front. I couldn't afford to lose you. And you know too much, anyway." Bundy rubbed his hands together. "We're going places from now on." He hung his topcoat on its hook and then searched for cigarettes. "Hell, I'm out of smokes. Got any?"

Johnny shook his head.

"Well, I'll run down to the corner and get a pack. Keep listening to that radio. From now on, no small-time jobs. Bruce Bundy's on top, and he's going to stay there." The pince-nez glittered triumphantly as Bundy went lightly up the stairs and vanished.

Johnny stared at the radio, hating it, hating the music that drifted out from across the abyss of time. No way out. Things couldn't get worse. . . .

Oh—*couldn't* they?

The hourly news broadcast came on. Johnny jotted down a few notes. Then he paused, his eyes widening.

"Run down today by a truck as he attempted to cross Fifth Street, John Drake, owner of a local music store, was killed instantly—"

"Oh my God!" said Johnny Drake, turning gray as an oyster. The radio

had suddenly turned into an infernal machine. With horrified haste, Johnny switched it off and retreated into a corner, where he stared at nothing and wondered where that icy wind was coming from.

DINAH was surprised by his appearance the next evening. Johnny arrived whistling, bearing gifts of roses, wine, and candy. A hundred years seemed to have dropped from his face.

"Johnny!" she said. "What's happened?"

"I'm in love," he explained. "Make like a kiss! There!"

Dinah felt better than she had done in weeks. "Roses! And candy!"

"And champagne," Johnny chuckled. "That isn't all. Tomorrow, an engagement ring flowing with diamonds—dripping with 'em. Then we get married. Then I sell the store. Maybe we won't be rich, but we'll have enough to buy you ice cream cones every day."

"No, you're not crazy," Dinah said thoughtfully. "But I don't get it."

Johnny performed a few steps of a hornpipe. Then he dived for the radio. "Just about the right time. Listen to this, darling."

Station WAZ was on the air, giving its hourly news broadcast. Johnny winked at Dinah. "Here it comes."

"Run down today by a truck," said the commentator, "as he attempted to cross Fifth Street, John Drake, owner of a local music store, was killed instantly—"

"Johnny!"

"It's okay. Do I look dead?"

"No, but—you weren't hurt?"

"I wasn't near Fifth Street today, honey. Wait a minute. Listen to the rest of the broadcast. I didn't hear any more last night—"

"What?"

"Why—n—nothing. Just listen."

The radio was talking in a chattily informal manner. "This brings to a close our news summary. News of the hour on the hour. The next—one moment!" There was a pause.

"Flash! The man killed today by a truck on Fifth Street, erroneously identified as John Drake, has been recognized by police authorities as Bruce Bundy, notorious bandit and murderer! The error arose when a reporter on the scene examined the contents of Bundy's topcoat pockets and found there papers, wallet, and an identification disk belonging to John Drake—"

Johnny switched off the radio. "So Bruce Bundy's dead," he murmured.

Dinah was staring. "Your wallet was found in his pocket? How—"

"Maybe somebody put it there," Johnny said, smiling partly like Mona Lisa and partly like a Cheshire cat. "Anyhow, Bundy's death was a pure accident. Nobody can blame *me*!"

"But why should they?"

For answer, Johnny stuffed a chocolate cream into Dinah's mouth. "Never you mind. Just think about tomorrow. We've got to buy an engagement ring, look for a house, sell the store—"

Dinah put her cheek against Johnny's. "Do you think you should sell it? I could help you, and it's a living."

"You're right," Johnny said. "On second thought, I'd better keep the store. But it won't be open for business. It'll be my private office. You see, darling, I've got a new job. Good pay, easy hours, and a future."

"No! What is it?"

"I'm a gossip columnist."

"B—but—can you do it?"

"Why not?" Johnny grinned wickedly. "It's just a matter of finding out the news before it happens. What's so hard about that?"

"Oh, honey," Dinah said, snuggling closer. "You're wonderful!"





"How do you do?" They spoke simultaneously like a vaudeville act

The Fantastic Twins

by JOHN YORK CABOT

The twins had a secret knowledge of the power of words, and they also had a formula to increase it

I LOOKED up from the copy I was writing—something to persuade mothers that their offspring *begged* for a particularly foul brand of patent medicine—and blinked in astonishment.

"How do you do?" they spoke simultaneously, like a vaudeville act. They both wore severe black silk summer suits, both carried battered black derbies in their hands, and both were possessed of gray whiskers and old-fashioned sideburns. They were both short

and dumpy, and as they stood there gravely in the doorway of the tiny hovel that is laughingly called my private office, I wondered how in the hell the receptionist had let them in.

I thought of Tweedledum and Tweedledee. I took another quick gander at the whiskers and sideburns.

"If it's cough drops," I said, "I don't want any, thanks."

They shook their heads, simultaneously.

"We are not selling cough drops."

Again the vocal teamwork. "You are a copy writer," they added in unison. "You write advertisements."

"Yes. And at the moment I am very busy writing an advertisement. If you gentlemen will excuse me . . ." I turned back to my typewriter to punctuate my meaning.

"Our name is Mollison," they said, ignoring the hint. "We have written a book. We are psychologists."

"I have a book," I snapped. "And I don't figure I need any psychologists. Not for a while yet, anyway."

"But this book should be of interest to you," they said. I was beginning to wonder what they'd sound like separately.

I gave up.

"Why?" I demanded. "Why should any book you two, ah, gentlemen would write be of interest to me?"

"It might help you," they declared. "And we need someone like yourself to try it out. It concerns the psychology of words. It is a system. A scientific system."

"The only system I'm in the market for right at the moment is one which will come in handy at my bookmaker's," I told them.

They looked at one another for an instant, then back at me.

"You don't understand," they declared. "Words are your business. This book will help you. If it works."

"Look," I said, getting a little hot under the collar. "This is the day before payday. I'm broke. I don't want to buy any books. Especially about words. Good day, gentlemen."

Again they looked at each other, and again they turned back to me.

"You don't understand. We just want you to read our book. We just want you to try it. We aren't attempting to sell it."

"There is no obligation to buy," I

said, quoting from one of the oldest sales gags since Cleopatra peddled a rug to Caesar. "You can just tear off your right arm and send it in to us if you aren't satisfied. Nuts!"

Then, in a lightning gesture that caught me flat footed, one of the two sideburned old goats pulled forth a thick sheaf of manuscript pages from a briefcase he'd had inconspicuously under his arm and shoved the pile of papers onto my desk.

"Here," they said in unison. "You will find our name and address on the outside. Read the book. Try out our system. Let us know."

I was blinking dazedly at the lumpy manuscript on my desk. I scarcely noticed that they bowed simultaneously from the hips, popped their derbies on their heads, and backed toward the door.

"Good day," they said. "Let us know."

I WAS still staring, fascinated, at the thick manuscript before I looked up again to see they'd gone.

"Hey!" I yelled, jumping up and running after them. "Hey, wait a minute!"

But my two mysterious visitors were already out the front door of the agency. And by the time I dashed to the hallway, the elevator had already taken them down.

Vastly annoyed, and equally perplexed, I walked back into the office. It was while I was heading to my own little cubicle that Vickers—he's the head of the agency: Vickers & Dunn—stepped out of his ornate sanctum and bellowed.

"Yore!" he yelled. "Come in here a minute." His red face was angry under his bald pate, and he adjusted his horn rimmed specs the way he does when he is disapproving of something.

He paid the salary, and my name was Yore, so I came.

"Yes, Mr. Vickers," I said, when we'd stepped inside his office and he closed the door.

"Yore," he barked immediately. "Your copy has been lousy this last month. I might say unusually lousy."

I waited. You couldn't argue with Vickers. Although nearing his fifties he still considered himself a Boy Genius, a Brilliant Executive.

"And furthermore," he added, "the stuff you've turned out on the Kiddie-Lax account to date has been miserable. You aren't doing a good job of making mothers believe their wee tots scream for the product."

"They scream because of it," I snapped, nettled.

"Very funny," said Vickers. And he didn't mean it. "So funny that I'm prompted to tell you I'm taking you off the Kiddie-Lax job and turning it over to someone competent to handle it. Obviously, it's too tough for you."

I bit my underlip, choking back a few things I might have said about his small fry second-rate agency and where it and the job I held could go. But there was no sense in being hasty until I'd lined up a job with another outfit first.

"All right," I replied. "Just as you say. What'll I work on?"

Vickers debated an instant, pursing his lips to show that a brilliantly conceived decision was coming up.

"You take over the Chew-Chew Account," he ordered.

My eyes must have bugged out and my veins bulged with the sudden indignation I felt. The Chew-Chew Gum account was the smallest in the agency. It was strictly peanuts. A job for a junior copywriter, not a veteran.

"Did you hear me?" he asked.

I knew what this meant. It was the

prelude to the old heave-ho. I was set for the sack. That was the way Vickers always worked it. I could only nod. I wasn't able to trust myself to speak.

"And don't botch it," he said as I stepped out. . . .

I WAS so burned up that I wasn't aware the sheaf of manuscript from the sideburned Mollison duet was still on my desk when I went back into my own cubicle. In fact I was so burned up that I didn't notice anything until I realized it was time for lunch half an hour later.

Whatever on earth prompted me, I don't know, but I had the thick manuscript sheaf with me when I popped my hat on my dome and stormed out of the office for lunch a few minutes after that. Maybe it was because it was big and heavy and easy to throw at someone.

Or maybe it was because I was so mad I wanted something to keep me from slugging people. Anyway I still had it in my paw when I parked myself in a booth at the place I'd decided to drink my lunch.

Four highballs and fifteen minutes after I'd planked myself down in this joint, I was trying to calm myself down by abstractedly thumbing through the manuscript as I gulped my forget-me-nots.

Of course I wasn't able to catch much of the drift of the thing, for my mind kept going back to Vickers and the homicide I'd like to wreak on him. But I was roughly aware that the two sideburned old ducks with the gray whiskers had written some sort of a technical treatise of the science of words.

There was a lot of stuff in the manuscript to the effect that words—since they were the actual symbols of ideas—were tangible powers for force in them—

selves.* And there was more about the powers of force in words being just as strong as the powers of energy of electrical force in motors. It didn't make much sense. But it kept me calmed down just a little.

Then the manuscript—after having proved, in some fashion I couldn't understand, that words were as real as chemical elements or electrical current—went on to state that words could be definitely united by formula to produce definite and invariable effects on people. This was where the psychology hitched onto it.

And this was the point at which my tenth drink began to fuzz everything up beyond the point of further understanding. I had five more drinks before my watch told me that I was an hour late, and that I was due back at the office.

So clutching the manuscript and forgetting my hat, I careened out of the place and back to the office. Under any other circumstances, I'd have been smart enough not to pop my head into the agency in that condition. But I was feeling very much to-hell-with-it. And Vickers would can me the following day anyway.

I remember that I was disappointed to find that Vickers had gone out for an afternoon's golf and that I couldn't tell him what I thought of him. I recall, also, that I put on my best sober front as I entered the office and made my way to my cubicle.

IT was while I was busy cleaning out the stuff from my desk that Red, the office boy, stuck his head in the

door and handed me a sheaf of papers.

"Mr. Vickers said to give you these papers when you got back from lunch, Mr. Yore," he said. "It's the dope on the Chew-Chew Gum account he's put you on." Red paused to look at the stuff I was packing. Then went on. "He says there's an urgent rush on this Chew-Chew copy. It has to be at the printers by four this afternoon, so's it can be in the papers by tomorrow."

And with that Red took his head out of the door and vanished before I could hit him with an inkpot. I looked at the mess of work he'd left on my desk. High-ho the merry-oh, I thought. Vickers will lose this account, small as it is, for that copy can rot for all I care. Let it miss the deadline.

I went on packing.

Then, suddenly as a Joe Louis left hook, I got a bright idea. A trifle tipsy, perhaps, but still a bright idea. I would really get back at that snake Vickers. I would write the Chew-Chew copy. I would write him such copy as he had never seen before. He was out of the office and wouldn't be back until the following day. In the meantime the copy would go straight to the newspapers and be in print before he could stop it.

Chew-Chew was a small account. But Vickers would lose a lot of agency prestige in addition to the peanuts that the account paid. I took off my coat, dropped it carefully on the floor, and rolled up my sleeves.

A few minutes later and my typewriter was clacking out the Chew-Chew copy. Clacking it out somewhat slowly, however, for I was spending a little time referring to the thick sheaf of manuscript papers on the table beside me. The manuscript left by the two sideburned, bewhiskered old goats named Mollison.

I was using a chart which was part

* This is a premise which is actually maintained by numerous students of the Hampfher theory of phonetic psychology. They claim that since sounds have been proven, in many instances, to have psychological activating power, words have the same power plus an additional motivating energy due to the fact that they represent formed ideas.—Ed.

of the first few pages of the manuscript. It was called a "Scientific Word Chart." And the idea of it was supposed to formulate whatever you were trying to say into an invincible, irresistible combination of words—a combination absolutely guaranteed to produce a desired effect on the reader.

It was hodgepodge, of course.

It was the most stupendously crazy hodgepodge I had ever encountered anywhere. It was utterly nonsensical.

Which was swell. For it would louse up the Chew-Chew copy more horribly than anything I could ever think of myself. I laughed and laughed and laughed. And my typewriter clacked along, making the most magnificently absurd word combinations man has ever encountered.

When I'd finally finished, I tore the sheet from the machine and pushed a buzzer that would bring Red, the office boy, a-running. I was mentally delighting in the picture of Vickers' face the following morning when he saw the Chew-Chew copy in the papers.

The copy was ten times as confusing, thirty times as senseless, as the most absurd nursery rhymes or nonsense syllables you have ever read. It was a riot. It was a scream.

Red appeared a moment later, and I gave him the stuff.

He glanced at it—he was always a snoopy kid—and blinked in bewilderment.

"But, Mr. Yore," he said, "this must be the wrong stuff. It doesn't make sense!"

"Listen," I snapped. "Do as you are told. It's an experiment, and it's to be run just like that. Chop, chop!"

He left, and drunkenly I finished packing my things. I even took the thick Mollison manuscript sheaf with me as I teetered out of the office some ten minutes later. I was bidding adieu

to Vickers & Dunn Advertising Agency, quitting before I was canned.

And I had had the last laugh.

I checked my things at my hotel, and then I remember climbing into a cab to start the evening round of my tear. After all, I reasoned a bit thickly, a man has a right to celebrate losing a job, hasn't he?

THE binge I tied on must have been a lulu. For I woke up in my hotel room the following morning, stretched out on the cold, cold floor, with a staggering hangover. My pockets were stuffed with Chew-Chew gum, probably through some puckish impulse I'd had the night before. I felt miserable. My head was like a balloon in a barrage.

And I was only able to think of what an assinine stunt I'd pulled.

Obviously, if the Chew-Chew copy was in the papers by now, I'd fixed Vickers' clock for him. But it was just occurring to me that I had also fixed my own. A copywriter doesn't pull a stunt like that on an agency—no matter how sore he is at the boss—and then try to land a job with another concern. It just doesn't work like that. My little puckish prank had undeniably blackballed me throughout the entire advertising game.

I was sick. From my conscience and from the hangover.

I picked up the house phone and told the girl at the switchboard not to let any calls reach me until evening. Then I got room service.

The bellhop appeared with the ice pack and the hot water bottle I'd sent for some ten minutes later. Bleary-eyed, I let him in while he put the stuff on the nightstand beside my bed. As I tipped him I noticed that his jaws were working furiously.

I gazed sickly at him, my mind shot back to my crimes.

"Don'cha like gum?" he asked.

"No." I handed him a quarter. "Get out!"

I started closing the door.

"But this is Chew-Chew," the bell hop protested.

It was more than I could stand. With a half-gurgling scream I pushed him bodily out into the hallway and slammed the door. Then I ruefully staggered back to my bed and flopped face downward, sick and exhausted. My head was spinning like a multi-colored pinwheel. Through the fog of my nausea, I could see my coat on the floor where I'd dropped it. In thus depositing it, the contents had spilled forth from the pockets.

Small packages of Chew-Chew gum were spilled all over the floor.

With a moan I closed my eyes, shutting out the sight. . . .

SOMEONE was pounding rivets into my skull, and finally I couldn't stand it any longer. I opened my eyes. For a moment I didn't realize where I was or what had happened.

And then I knew I must have fallen off into a heavy sleep. A quick glance at the window of my room told me that it was early-evening dark outside.

But the pounding continued.

Now I was awake enough to realize that someone was hammering on my door. Hammering incessantly.

I climbed out of bed, groggy and shivering.

"Yes?" I bellowed.

"Yore, old man, are you all right?" A voice outside the door yelled anxiously.

For a minute I stood there stupidly, and then the voice registered on my consciousness. I couldn't mistake it anywhere. It belonged to Vickers!

I didn't know quite what to do. He was probably accompanied by police.

He might be carrying a gun, ready to blast my brains out. Or maybe he intended to tear me apart with his bare hands.

Automatically, I stepped across the room and opened the door, before being fully aware of what I was doing. It was Vickers, all right. And he stood there—smiling!

You could have knocked me over with a feather duster. I was only able to gape foolishly as he pushed past me into the room, talking a mile a minute.

"I've been trying to call you all day, but I couldn't get past the switchboard girl," he said excitedly. "Finally I had to come down here to see if everything was okay."

I still didn't say anything. I couldn't. I just listened as he went on.

"Everywhere, every candy counter, every cigar stand, every drug store," he babbled, "it's the same story—all sold out!"

"What?" I managed weakly. "What's sold out?"

"Chew-Chew!" said Vickers.

I wanted to faint.

"The most amazing thing that's ever happened to advertising," he was still babbling. "It marks a new era, Yore. It's incredible! I don't know how you ever hit on it, or what your secret is, but man-oh-man, it's stupendous!"

It was then that I noticed he was chewing even as he spoke.

"That gum," I faltered, "that gum you're chewing—"

"Is Chew-Chew, of course," he said. "I could no more resist that sales copy than the next guy." His glance shot down to the packages on the floor. "Neither could you, I see," he laughed. "Mind if I have some?"

I nodded weakly.

"Go ahead. Take all you want." I walked back to the bed and sat down on the edge very carefully, so as not

to disrupt this wild dream. In the meantime Vickers had dropped to his hands and knees and was greedily scooping up the stray packages of Chew-Chew.

THIS much was beginning to be clear to me. I wasn't crazy. Neither was Vickers. Chew-Chew gum, thanks to the horrible mess of wordage I'd pounded out for it—while using the Mollisons' formula for words—had sold out everywhere in the city. Even Vickers, on his hands and knees at the moment, was ample testimony of what reading that Chew-Chew copy had done to people!

Then I recalled that bellhop, mouth full of the stuff, who seemed shocked that I hadn't been aware he was masticating Chew-Chew. And those packages on the floor, the ones I'd filled my pockets with when blind drunk, while the copy was fresh in my fogged mind, hadn't been my idea of a puckish bit of irony. I had bought the stuff because of the copy itself. Probably I'd chewed it throughout the entire drunken evening!

This was much more than I could stand. I had to be alone. I had to think this thing through. I had to stabilize the entire loony whirlwind of confusion. There was plenty of adjusting to be done in my mental pattern.

"Look," I said to Vickers, who was just rising, after stuffing his pockets with the packages of Chew-Chew, "why don't you see me tomorrow, in the office? I don't feel any too well, and I've got some things to straighten out."

His face went a trifle ashen.

"I hope," he said with a sick, false smile, "that you aren't taking what I said to you yesterday seriously. After all, Yore, I was only joking. You'll see I was only joking when I tell you that I need a partner like you. I've

been considering you for some time, you know. There's a substantial raise involved, of course, and—"

"Look," I repeated. "I'll see you tomorrow. We'll talk about it then."

He backed to the door, eager to comply with my slightest wish.

"Surely, old man. Whatever you say. Heh, heh. Got to keep my new partner satisfied, eh?"

"Goodnight," I said.

"Don't forget," Vickers said. "I'll expect you tomorrow—at your convenience, of course."

"Yeah, goodnight."

He left, uncertainly, shakily, obviously hoping that I wasn't holding any grudges.

I did a great deal of rationalizing in the next several hours. The incredible situation called for a lot of it. But finally the thing was beginning to work itself out for me. Finally, I was getting adjusted to this astonishing state of affairs.

The sideburned, bewhiskered Mollisons, crazy though they had seemed, were the damndest pair of geniuses the world had ever seen!

And I, Mike Yore, was in possession of a formula that could coin me millions of bananas.

It made me a little bit frightened, sitting there thinking of it. Of course I would have to find the Mollisons. I could undoubtedly make some sort of a deal with them. They certainly deserved their share of the gravy.

I WENT over to the telephone. My hangover had vanished. I felt like a man on the crest of a hundred-foot wave. It was wonderful, magnificent, dizzying. I was practically a millionaire!

And then someone was knocking on my door again.

I opened it to see four expensively-

clad, beet-faced gentlemen of obvious dignity. One of them stood foremost. He had white hair and wore a pair of be-ribboned spectacles. He coughed impressively.

"My name, sir," he declared, "is Trewlawny."

I frowned.

"My name is Yore," I began automatically.

"Yes," said the expensively-clad old duck named Trewlawny, "We know your name. These gentlemen are my associates." Obviously their importance was nothing compared as to his, for he didn't bother to introduce them.

I waved them to the few chairs I had in the room.

"What can I do for you, gentlemen?"

Trewlawny did all the talking for the group. His three paunched brethren took seats while he remained on his feet.

"I am Augustus Trewlawny of the Federated Realty Corporation," he began. "These gentlemen are on the board of directors. We have come to offer you a flat sum of twenty-five hundred dollars to write some advertising copy for us, immediately."

I gaped at this.

"What in—" I began.

Trewlawny held up his red hand. I noticed he wore platinum cuff links, centered by diamonds.

"You are the Yore who wrote the sensational advertising copy for the Chew-Chew gum account, are you not?"

I nodded.

"We want similar copy, that is to say, copy of the same brand as you wrote for Chew-Chew gum, written for our corporation," he declared.

This sounded just as insane as anything yet.

"Why?" I demanded. "And what's the rush?"

Trewlawny grew a little redder.

"I am no fool, sir. I know a medium that strikes the public fancy when I see one. I read your Chew-Chew copy. It sold gum. We want the same kind of copy to sell our Great Gulch Land Boom. It goes on the open market tomorrow morning. There is no time to waste."

There was another knock on the door. It was the bellhop, with the stuff I'd checked at the desk the night before. I checked through it. The Mollison manuscript sheaf was there.

When the bellhop made his exit I sat down on the bed.

"Go ahead," I told Trewlawny. "This sounds interesting."

"We want to create a greater demand for our realty project at Great Gulch," Trewlawny continued. "Consequently we decided that copy—in pamphlet form—of the type you wrote for Chew-Chew gum, distributed on the floor of the exchange, just before the selling begins, would insure our success."

"A good idea," I nodded.

Trewlawny beamed.

"Thank you, sir. Then you accept my offer?"

I took a deep breath. If this geezer wanted my copy enough to come to me in this rush for it, it was worth more than twenty-five hundred smackers.

"Twenty-five hundred isn't enough," I said, holding tight to the edge of the table.

"Three thousand, then," said Trewlawny.

"Twenty-five thousand," I heard a voice demanding rashly. It was mine!

"Agreed!" snapped Trewlawny, and I almost fainted then and there.

I FINALLY got hold of myself. I nodded. My brain was swimming. Twenty-five thousand, and this was just a start. This was just the first twenty-

four hours of my new gold mine. Hell, I'd be a billionaire at least!

"We brought the cash," said Trewlawny. And one of his associates opened a briefcase and began piling sheafs of big denomination bills on the table in front of me. I gave up trying to eat. Hell, who could eat under such circumstances?

We made the arrangements. They were to clear out of the room, to leave me alone for a couple of hours, while I wrote the copy. Then Trewlawny would pick it up, rush it to the printers, and have the pamphlets ready to distribute on the floor of the exchange by morning.

I thought of Vickers' measly offer of a partnership and laughed aloud. Hell, you couldn't blame me if I was a little crazy from the heat of twenty-five thousand dollars!

For the next two hours, then, alone in my hotel room, with a copy of the Mollison Word Chart beside me, I hammered out the stuff for the Great Gulch Land Boom on my portable typewriter. This was just a start . . . just a start . . . just a start—that's what the clacking of the typewriter kept singing in my brain.

And exactly two hours later, Trewlawny was knocking at the door to my room. He was more excited than I was, and he scarcely glanced at the sheaf of copy I handed him. As a matter of fact, I didn't know what I'd written any more than he did, for—although I'd used the Mollison Word Chart as per directions—my mind had been too filled with the thought of yachts, sleek limousines, and all that scads of money can buy, to pay attention to what I was doing.

When Trewlawny left I called room service for some champagne. Then began a much happier secluded celebration than I'd had the night before, but

I got just as drunk, however, and it was morning when I came to, stretched out on the floor of my room with another banging hangover.

But I didn't mind my buzzing bean this time. I was on the top of the world—hangover or not—as I had a pick-me-up breakfast sent to my room.

The blow came after I had shaved and dressed.

It came in the shape of a small leather briefcase I noticed on the chair beside the door. A briefcase that had been forgotten by one of Trewlawny's associates. It was my curiosity that prompted me to open it, and further curiosity that prompted me to look at the first paper in the sheaf inside.

It was a letter. A letter addressed to Trewlawny, and obviously well read. It was from someone in Washington. The someone in Washington told Trewlawny in no uncertain terms that "*The F.B.I. is hot after us. Unload the Great Gulch Land Boom stock immediately. They've proved it to be worthless. Time counts for everything. Get all you can for it and skip town!*"

I didn't bother to read the signature. The room was reeling. In my pocket I had the cash Trewlawny had given me. I'd intended to plunk it right in the bank. It burned like a hot iron now, however. For it was tainted—but definitely!

And I was implicated in the Trewlawny hoax. Up to my ears. I'd written the copy. Cold sweat trickled down my spine. I had visions of the Big House, maybe a life term behind those gray walls. For at this very instant my copy was selling fraudulent real estate to thousands of suckers, and for countless thousands of dollars. I was sick, and crazy, and panicky, all at once.

MAYBE I had some crazy idea that I was destroying evidence. But

I dashed back into my room, grabbed the Mollison manuscript and was frantically holding a match under it a minute later. I watched it burn to ashes. Then I realized what an asinine stunt that was. It hadn't helped. It wouldn't get me out of the soup. I had visions of Mike Yore standing behind bars with his head shaved.

And then I got another wild brainstorm. I'd find the sideburned, bewhiskered Mollisons. They'd have some counter-solvent to their Word Chart. They'd be able to figure out an irresistible word spiel that could *unsell* the suckers who must at this moment be reading those Great Gulch Land Boom pamphlets.

They'd *have* to have!

I made it across town to the hotel address the Mollisons had given me the day before. Made it in nothing flat, in a taxicab that flew. I dashed into the hotel a minute after, and was questioning the clerk at the lobby desk a mile a minute.

"Yes, the Mollisons *did* live here. Two strange old codgers, weren't they?" the clerk said.

I was wild with impatience. It took me fully two more minutes to draw the rest of the information from the clerk. It seemed that the *keepers* for the Mollison codgers had found them only yesterday. They were charges in a rich, private mental sanitarium. Quite batty, both of them. They broke loose now and then. But they were harmless, quite harmless. Wealthy, too. Interesting, eh?

"No," answered the clerk to my screaming inquiry. "I don't know what sanitarium they broke loose from. The keepers didn't say."

"Oh, God," I moaned sickly. "And I haven't time to find out!"

I jumped back in the taxi, then, nearly nuts from frantic desperation. I

had no idea of what to do next. The Great Gulch Land Boom stock was probably being bought at this instant. And a cell was being prepared for me in the federal penitentiary. I told the cabbie to continue flying—and to drive to the exchange.

Idiotic though it sounds, I must have been figuring to go to the exchange, find a central spot on the floor, and scream to the high heavens that the Great Gulch Land Boom stock was all crooked. It seemed to be the only thing left to do. It was all I could think of. The cabbie dropped me in front of the exchange ten minutes later.

The floor of the exchange, where the trading was going on, was a scene of the wildest hysteria I have ever seen. And from every voice around me, as I crowded close to the floor, I could hear the names, "Trewlawny . . . Great Gulch . . . Great Gulch . . . Trewlawny."

And then I saw them, Trewlawny and his three associates, my chums of but a few hours ago!

The four of them stood in the middle of the floor. All waved their arms wildly. They were, as impossible as it sounds, buying—*bidding on something!*

But they should have been selling. They should have been minting thousands and thousands from suckers buying the Great Gulch stock. I couldn't stand it. This was too much. It was too impossible, too outlandish.

"The Board of Directors and President of Great Gulch Land Boom have been buying up every last share of their own stock at staggering prices all day," a red-faced gentleman beside me explained, seeing my astonishment. "It's the most incredible thing that's ever happened. They won't let a soul outbid them!"

"Did they," my voice shook, "did they distribute their sales pamphlets?"

The red-faced gentleman shook his head.

"No. They stormed onto the floor the minute trading opened and began buying up their own stock."

I SUDDENLY felt as limp as a rag doll. Part of me was crying in sheer relief, and another part was laughing hysterically. For it was all too plain what had happened. Trewlawny and his associates had read the pamphlets before distributing them. They'd been irresistibly sold—through the Mollison formula—on their own worthless stuff!

Somehow I still had strength enough to push my way out of there. I needed

a drink, badly. I'd been through heaven and hell in less than twelve hours. But now it was over. For good. No federal pen for yours truly. But no millions, either. For the Mollison manuscript was ashes in my room. And the two sideburned gents were safely back in whatever booby house they'd hatched from.

But I wasn't going to look them up. I'd had enough. I was twenty-five grand to the good, and not in jail. That was plenty for me!

And as for you, if two sideburned bewhiskered old guys try to sell you a book, call their keeper—even if they aren't crazy . . .

COMING NEXT MONTH—A grand new story by that master of humor, Robert Bloch, author of "The Man Who Walked Through Mirrors." This one's about a tough gangster who takes on the "Society of Diminutives" in a snappy bowling and drinking match! Sound's good, huh? Well, take a tip from your pal, the editor, and *don't miss it!*

MEN *of the* 'BRONZE AGE

by **EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS**

Turning and looking up, Dian saw the terror of the Pellucidarian skies—a giant thipdar circling above the gas bag . . . Forty feet in length, with bat-like wings spreading fully thirty feet, it was armed with long, sharp teeth and horrible talons. . . . If it attacked the gas bag and ripped it open, Dian would be plummeted into the water below! Helpless, David Innes' mate, Dian the Beautiful, drifted over the Land of the Awful Shadow. . . . What would be her fate? . . . Follow her through gripping, chilling adventures in "Men of the Stone Age," another great David Innes story by the inimitable **EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS** . . .

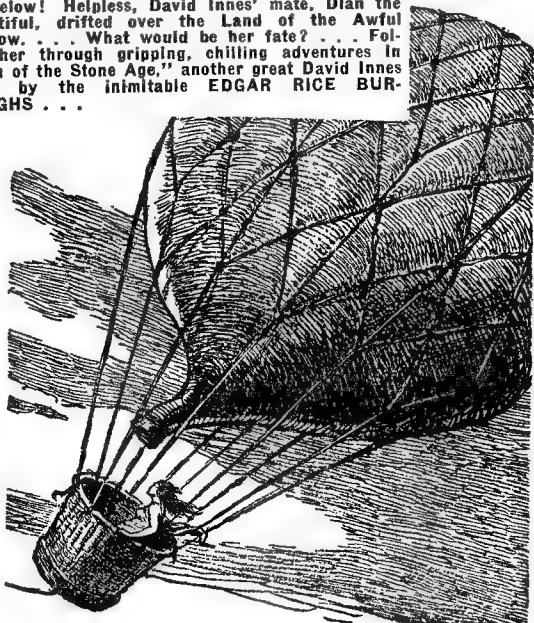


ONE OF
SEVEN
THRILLING
TALES IN THE

BIG MARCH ISSUE

AMAZING STORIES

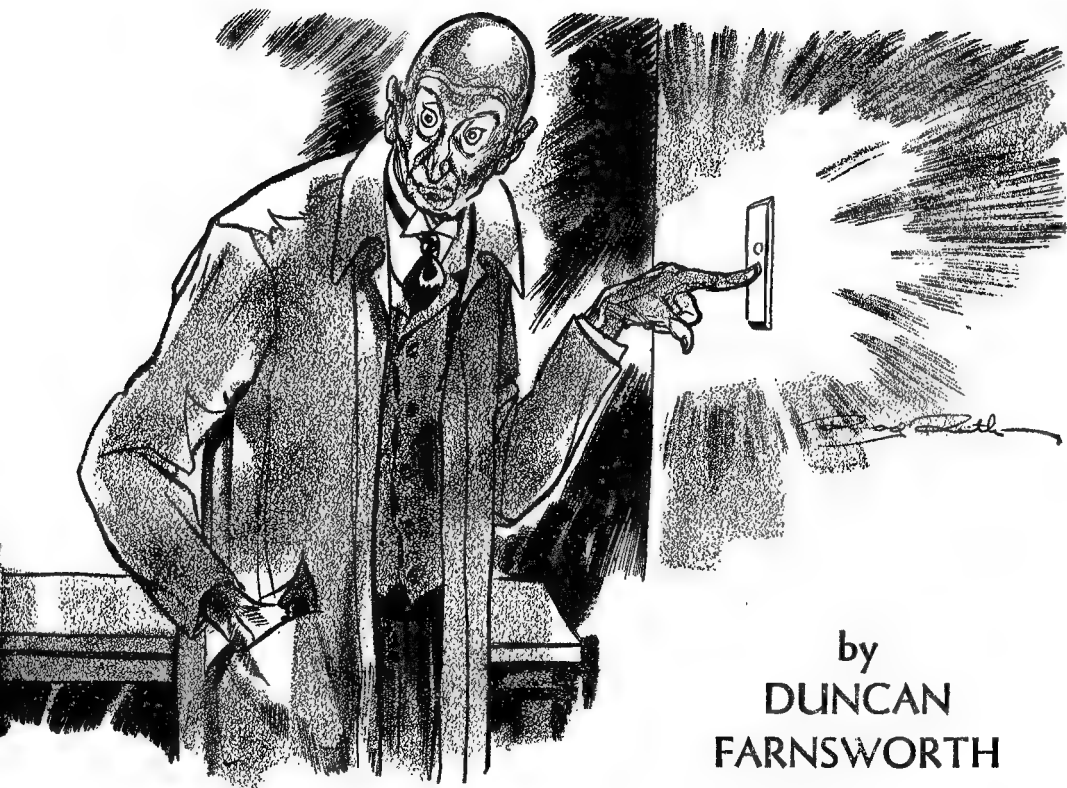
NOW ON SALE AT
NEWSSTANDS EVERYWHERE



Afraid **TO LIVE**



Sergi walked over to press the button



by
DUNCAN
FARNSWORTH

Have you ever been afraid? Certainly you have. Now what if there was some way of magnifying that fear—wouldn't you hate to see your own shadow behind you?

WENDY BLAINE stopped at my desk on her way out of the city room. Wendy is tiny, very well proportioned, and red-headed. She has a smile that could melt the ice right out from under Sonja Henie's flashing skates. She also has an eighteen cylinder mind and a writing style that makes her the most valued girl reporter on the staff of the *Morning Globe*.

"Look, Dake," Wendy said, "I wonder if you'd do me a favor?"

"Point out the dragon, Baby," I told her, "and I'll slay him and serve him on toast. Or if it's a mountain you want

climbed, just point it out. Ole Dake aims to please."

She grinned, and her nose crinkled in that delightful way it has.

"The assignment isn't that tough, Dake. I just want to ask you if you'd mind taking over the yarn I was supposed to write on the new trend in women's footwear. I have all the dope in the desk, a batch of comments I collected at the Shoe Manufacturer's Convention, last night."

"So that's where you were," I sighed. "I was afraid you'd been out stepping with some young scion of wealth. Sure, Baby, I'd write hints to the housewife

for you if it'd make you happy."

Wendy's nose crinkled again. Appreciatively this time.

"Gee, Dake, thanks. That darned feature would have wasted an hour, and I'm in a hurry."

"What for?" I asked. "Got a date with some—"

"You *do* check up, don't you?"

Wendy laughed. "Nope. But I'm not telling what's up. I've got a whale of a feature yarn on the fire. Haven't even told the boss yet. But I'll need the entire afternoon to get out on it."

"Ahhh, secrecy."

Wendy grinned.

"Yep, secrecy."

"Good luck, Baby."

"Thanks, Dake."

Then she was gone. Sighing, I got up and ambled down the aisle of desks to Wendy's little niche in the city room. Sitting down behind her typewriter I began to rummage around in the drawers of her desk to find the material for the yarn she'd asked me to do. Tiny, our fattest copy boy, strolled past and gave me a dirty grin. It was no secret in the offices of the *Morning Globe* that Dake Stoddard was the happiest mug in the world when he was running errands for Wendy Blaine. But, hell, I didn't mind. Wendy and I would be married sometime. Of course *she* didn't know anything about this, but I'd planned it that way.

I found the stuff from the Shoe Convention that she'd mentioned. Enough to make a feature around it. And when I sorted it out and stuffed the junk I didn't want back into the desk I saw a thick manila envelope lying far back in the center drawer.

Being somewhat of a snoop by nature, I was tempted by the appearance of the large envelope. It probably had material on that secret yarn she'd mentioned.

I took out the envelope. Then I grinned.

"*This is personal. Dake. Uh, uh, uh, don't open. Wendy.*"

She had scrawled the above message across the top, the little imp. I laughed again and shoved the envelope, unopened, back into the drawer of her desk.

I went back to my own desk, then, after about forty-five minutes I'd finished the feature for her. With a great flair for originality in slugs I titled it, "New Fall Trends In Women's Shoes." Then I punched the bell on my desk and sat back to wait for a copy boy. Tiny appeared by the time I'd smoked half a cigarette.

"Sometime you're gonna wear yourself out running up and down this office so fast, Tiny," I remarked sarcastically.

Tiny picked up the copy leisurely, glanced at the by-line, Wendy Blaine's, that I'd typed in the upper corner, and grinned.

"No, *Mister Blaine*," he retorted nastily, "not, me *Mam!*"

I heaved a paste tube at his retreating back, getting some satisfaction out of seeing him move quickly for a change. Then I sat back for another cigarette and a breathing spell, enjoying the quiet contemplation of Life, Love and Wendy Blaine.

"**DAKE!**" a voice roared in my ear.

"Yep, yep, yep," I said hastily, removing my feet from the desk and looking over to the right where my city editor, Cappert, was bearing down less than three yards from me.

"Get the hell to work," he roared. He was a big guy, well over fifty, with graying hair that was always as shaggy as a Newfoundland dog's.

"On what?" I asked.

"On the Allison yarn," he said. "Walker K. Allison. He's dead. Shot

himself!"

I blinked. Walker K. Allison was the richest man in the city. He was Money Bags personified. He was Big Business. Capital. Wall Street. Back Bay. He was also one of the most eccentric gents this world has ever seen.

"Shot himself?" I gasped. "Where?"

"I don't know," Cappert snapped. "I didn't look." He threw a fistful of papers on my desk. "Tell the switchboard to put on our morgue reporter. He's waiting to give you the details." Then Cappert stormed on, heading for the managing editor's office to pass the news on to the Very Big Shot.

I picked up the telephone at my elbow.

"Hello, girlie, put our morgue man through." I waited a few seconds, then an excited voice, that of the cub assigned to the morgue, came through to me. I began putting down the facts . . .

FOR the next six hours I was busier than a louse exterminator in Nazi Germany. For three more stories—all of them hot—broke right in the midst of the Allison yarn. And all of them were suicides like the first!

A famous musician, the internationally renowned Vergo Moritz, a pianist, had shot himself while in his luxurious suite at the Ambassador North Hotel. That came in on the telephone after I'd been pounding out copy on the Allison suicide for less than ten minutes.

Then, right on the heels of this second suicide, came the third. Miss Annabelle Bordeau, the leading lady in the successful play, "Madcap," which had been running to full houses for three months here in the city, had taken poison in her dressing room immediately after a matinee performance. Efforts to save her life had been futile.

To cap the climax, Mrs. Harrison

Green, the wife of Our Mayor Himself, leaped to her death from the eighteenth floor of a midtown department store!

The offices of the *Morning Globe* were torn up like they'd been taken over by a cyclone. The city editor, Cappert, ran up and down like a madman, dashing around the place as if he'd lost his mind. Even the managing editor, the Very Big Shot Himself, popped his head out of his office every ten minutes to squeal something frantic at somebody. When I tell you that even Tiny was running you'll know what I mean.

My fingers were falling off, I was typing that fast. My lungs were shot from chain smoking and screaming into telephones. And through it all, Cappert, my dear city editor, barged up to my desk every ten minutes to demand to know where in the hell Wendy Blaine was. Didn't she know there was hell breaking loose at her office? Didn't she know she'd be needed badly? Hadn't she seen the extras that had already hit the street? Did she want to lose her damned job? Who in the hell did she think she was anyway? All this, Cappert demanded of me.

"How in the hell do I know?" was all I could say in answer. I got tired shouting it back at him. And worried about Wendy. For she should have had sense enough to come a-running back at a time like this. No featurre could be that important. Where was she?

Little Wendy Blaine was the fair haired girl around the *Morning Globe*, but she wouldn't be for long if she didn't appear pretty quickly. But another two hours flew by, and no Wendy.

Our bulldog and three star editions had hit the streets and tranquility was just around the corner in the offices of the *Morning Globe*. The tension was easing off. What with three extras we'd shot out in addition to our regular editions, we'd pulled in all the extra circu-

lation that was lying around. By now the radios were carrying full accounts of the suicides, anyway, so Cappert came over to my desk.

"Okay, Dake. The heat is off. Call it a day."

I FISHED for a cigarette and pushed the mess of paper on my desk back. A glance at the clock on the wall showed that it was 10 p.m. It had really been a day.

"And tell Wendy Blaine to report to me before she goes to work in the morning," Cappert said.

"Listen, Boss, you aren't going to—" I began.

Cappert is a slave driver when the going is tough, but he isn't a louse. He shook his head.

"I'm not going to do anything, Dake. Hell, the kid probably got tied up somehow. But the Very Big Shot, our dear publisher, is set to give her the heaveho. He was squealing for features from her all day."

I suddenly felt indignant. They couldn't fire Wendy. But the Very Big Shot did nasty things occasionally. However, to repeat, Cappert wasn't really to blame.

"I'll quit, too," I said, getting up, "if that guy cans Wendy."

"Why don'tcha find her," Cappert suggested, "and cook up an alibi. She'll need a good one."

I gave Cappert a grateful glance.

"Good idea," I said.

He grunted and left. I got on the telephone. The switchboard in the lobby of Wendy's apartment hotel couldn't get any answer from her room. I called a couple of her girl friends. They hadn't seen her.

Then I remembered the feature, the secret things, she was working on. I went over to her desk. The envelope, the thick manila one, was still in the

center drawer. I took it out. This wasn't snooping. I had to find Wendy. Her job was on the block. She was in hot water.

I opened the envelope. There were nine or ten sheets of copy paper and numerous pamphlets inside. I sat down at her desk and began to go through them. The pamphlets were from various "Medical Healing Institutes." They all read like quack stuff, mumbo-jumbo healing hoaxes. I began to get the drift. Wendy was working on an expose feature about the quack medical joints, the unethical healers, around town.

Each of the pamphlets had a sheet of copy paper attached to it. And on the copy paper would be data about that particular quack den, the patients that went there, and that sort of thing Wendy had evidently been visiting some of them to dig up her story?

One pamphlet caught my eye in particular. It sounded so *damned* quacky. "PSYCHO-THERAPY TREATMENTS. MENTAL ADJUSTMENTS THROUGH THE SCIENCE OF RAY CONTROL," was the title on the thing. I looked it over carefully. There was no address on it, and it didn't make much sense. I turned my attention to the copy sheet Wendy had pinned to it. The address of the place in question she'd put at the top. And there were four names beneath it, under the heading of "Patients."

I read the first two names before it hit me. Then I read the next two and re-read the first two. My eyes bugged out like marbles. I was that shocked.

For the names Wendy had listed under "Patients" of this quack den were none other than the names of the four celebrities who had all committed suicide this very afternoon!

There they were. There was no disputing them. Walker K. Allison, Vergo

Moritz, Annabelle Bordeau, and Mrs. Harrison Green!

I CHOKED off a sudden impulse to shout wildly and dash for Cappert's desk with my findings. I don't know why I kept my mouth shut, but I did.

My hands were shaking as I held the sheet of copy paper and looked down at the name and address of the quack doctor that Wendy had listed as the proprietor of the joint, "Doctor Anton Sergi."

Carefully I put the papers back into the envelope, and the envelope into the center drawer. There would be a record there in case something happened when I went to look for Wendy. I had the address of the joint memorized. I got my hat.

I did a lot of thinking while I was on my way to the quack joint in a taxicab some four minutes later. A lot of thinking about a lot of angles to this thing. This quack Wendy had unearthed. This Doctor Sergi, had called himself a psycho-therapist. His patients, the ones Wendy had listed, had all committed suicide.

Roughly, I was aware that psychotherapy of the sort described in Doctor Sergi's pamphlet was supposed to be a kind of mental healing deal, in which worried people were brought around to a placid and happy state of mind through the use of the rays he claimed to have invented.

Walker K. Allison, Vergo Moritz, Annabelle Bordeau, and Mrs. Harrison Green must have been in bad mental states before they'd ever have put themselves into the hands of such a quack. But the important point was that—according to Wendy's findings—they had done so.

And the quack Doctor Sergi hadn't been of any help, apparently, for they'd all taken their own lives in their despair

over their troubles.

"Wendy, old gal," I told myself, "you've got a yarn here, Baby. What a yarn!"

I began to go over the suicide cases, one by one, in an effort to dig up something further to go on. Walker K. Allison, the big moneybagged tycoon, had shot himself. Shot himself and left a note saying that he couldn't stand the financial ruin he faced. Yet, peculiarly enough, the man was a human mint. His financial holdings were as sound as Gibraltar. That had been proven after his death. How could he have imagined he faced financial disaster when the opposite was so glaringly true?

I shook my head bewilderedly. Of course he had been extremely eccentric. Perhaps even a little unts. Maybe that was why.

But then there was Vergo Moritz, the celebrated pianist. Moritz had plugged himself also. There must be a quirk in the mind of those about to commit suicide that prompts them to give vent to a dramatic farewell, for Moritz had penned a parting note also. A parting note stating that he was going deaf, that he couldn't stand the thought of it, and that this was the only out. And yet, Moritz had been to a reputable physician some three weeks previously, investigators found, and had been assured that he was not going deaf even the slightest. Again I had to shake my head. Was Vergo crazy also?

As for the young actress, Annabelle Bordeau, she was beautiful and in the upswing of her career. There was apparently no reason for her suicide. Yet she'd taken poison. She, however, hadn't left a note of explanation. Nevertheless, she was one of Doctor's Sergi's patients. Wendy had her listed as such.

And Mrs. Harrison Green, the glamorous, happily married, middle-aged

wife of our mayor—what could have prompted her to commit suicide? She'd leaped from the department store window. There were no notes. But there must have been a reason.

I could imagine none. Yet, she'd been a patient of the quack Doctor Sergi.

IT WAS beginning to look as if that fact in itself was enough to lead to an unpleasant death. And suddenly I choked on the thought. Wendy might be there. Wendy would naturally pose as a patient in order to get her story. And as a patient of this quack —

I didn't end that thought. My spine was chilled. I leaned forward and barked into the cabbie's ear.

"An extra five if you put some speed in this crate."

Our cab began to roll, but swiftly. We made it cross-town in less than another ten minutes. Then we were careening down a narrow series of side streets in the vicinity of the address of Doctor Sergi.

It was a dingy neighborhood. Run down and ramshackle. Plenty of the buildings were held up by nothing more than the grace of God. We were a block away from the street where Doctor Sergi's offices were when I told the cabbie to heave to. We stopped with a lurch and I piled out. I slipped him some bills, plus a note I'd hastily scratched in the last five minutes.

"Take this to the office of the *Morning Globe* at eight o'clock tomorrow morning," I said. "Deliver it in person to Dake Stoddard, and if he isn't there, give it to the city editor and tell him to open it."

The cabbie blinked.

"Yeah, I got it. Okay."

I watched the taxi roar off from the curb, then I started down the dingy, poorly lighted little side street.

I tried to imagine all those famous people coming to this dirty, forsaken side of town to take treatments of some sort from a quack who called himself Doctor Sergi. And I also tried *not* to imagine Wendy posing as a patient of his.

Doctor Sergi's address was a three-story, ancient brick building in the middle of the next block. The buildings on both sides of it were vacant and boarded up. There was a small, black sign, with faded gold lettering on it, right next to the thick, paint-scarred door. I walked up a narrow flight of stone steps and looked at the sign.

"Doctor Anton Sergi," it said. "Treatments by appointment only."

I didn't have an appointment. But that wasn't what was worrying me. All I could think of was Wendy. All I could think of was what I'd give to know that she wasn't in here. For some reason, even though the evening was warm and I was perspiring from anxiety, I felt chill and a little shaky.

I punched the old bell beside the door.

Standing there on the steps I craned my head a little and tried to listen for footsteps from the inside of the place. There were none. There was nothing but silence. Then I heard a baby crying down at the end of the street, and a foreign voice raised angrily at the child.

I punched the bell again. Minutes passed. Still no sound from inside. Still no answer. Yet, somehow, I felt as if I were being *watched*.

Maybe it was that feeling that made me light a cigarette nonchalantly and stroll down the steps away from the house. I walked all the way back to the alley near the end of the street. Then, certain that I was out of sight, I ducked down that alley. It would bring me around to the back of the

place.

It did, and three minutes later I was moving furtively through the pitch blackness of the back yard of Doctor Sergi's quack den. This time I wasn't going to ring doorbells. This time I was going to get inside. I found a small basement window.

A LONG time ago I'd learned how to break a window noiselessly. I broke this one, then picked out the pieces of glass. I got down on my stomach and wriggled through the narrow opening. The dark, fetid air peculiar to a basement in an old house hit my nostrils. Everything in there was cloaked in inky blackness. I let myself drop, and my feet hit coal. But I was on the inside.

I waited there, holding my breath.

Snick!

A light switch was flicked on, and as the room was flooded by the sudden unexpected brilliance, I stood there blinking, trying to adjust my eyes to the lights. A voice was talking.

"Please put your hands up," the voice said.

My stomach did three or four flip-flops, then I was able to see. At the far end of the basement coal bin, standing on the first flight of a rickety staircase and looking down at me was a tall, thin, bald, beak-nosed old man. His face was parchment colored and the flesh around his jowels and eyes was wrinkled. He had a gun.

"Doctor Sergi, I presume," I said. But I didn't feel funny.

"I watched you at the front. Then I waited here, certain you'd try to break in through the basement," Doctor Sergi said. His voice was thin, flat.

"Amazing deduction," I murmured. Then I dropped quickly to my knees and my hand found a large chunk of coal. In the same motion I let it fly at

the old duck's skull. At that instant his gun went off, and in the roar of the explosion I could feel something tearing along the top of my cranium and darkness blanketing in all around me . . .

WHEN I opened my eyes again I was looking right at—Wendy Blaine!

And then I realized I was tied in a chair, and that so was she. We were in a brightly illuminated room with white walls, steel cabinets, and a huge table in the corner. But we were both alive, and Wendy was talking.

"Dake, oh, Dake. Thank God. I was afraid—" she began.

"Take it easy, Baby," I said through puffed lips. I could taste blood, and vaguely realized that it was trickling down from the bullet crease Doctor Sergi had put in my skull. My head was throbbing painfully.

"How long you been here, Baby?" I demanded.

"Ever since this afternoon, Dake. Oh, Dake, this man is crazy. He's stark, raving mad." And then Wendy was telling me what I'd already figured out. Telling me about the feature she was doing on quack healers. She told me, too, how she'd found out that this Sergi was working his mumbo-jumbo of Allison, Moritz, Bordeau and Mrs. Harrison. She told me, too, how she'd faked her way into the joint by posing as a patient in need of his help. She'd been here the day before. And when she'd returned today he'd been in a rage, found out somehow that she was a newspaper girl. He'd forced her, at the point of a gun into his room where he'd left her bound.

And then I gave her the dope about the four suicides, gave her every last detail about my end of the mess. She was white faced and shaken when I finished. So white faced and shaken

that she couldn't speak, even though she tried.

And then Doctor Sergi came into the room. He still carried his gun, but it was lying carelessly in the right lower pocket of a dirty white smock he'd donned.

"Well," he said unsmilingly. "I see my patients have met before. How fine. How very excellent."

I tried to bluff.

"Listen, Sergi, I know all about this racket. I know all about Allison, and Moritz, and the Bordeaux girl, and Mrs. Harrison." I cut it short at that, letting the implication of what else I might know take hold.

Sergi turned his gaze directly at me. And for the first time I saw the round, bright, staring quality of his eyes. They seemed to dominate his entire face. Just two bright, round, big, staring eyes.

"Yes," he said, matter-of-factly. "Yes, I killed them all. At least, I drove them to kill themselves. You see, as patients of mine, I had every opportunity to ascertain their, ah, psychological phobias, their strongest fears. Take Allison, for example, he was a man of great wealth; naturally his greatest subconscious fear was loss of his wealth. My ray treatments accentuated that fear far beyond its ordinary bounds. It became an obsession, then—in his *mind*—a reality. He thought he'd lost his wealth—and killed himself."*

I looked at Wendy. But I didn't interrupt. This was dynamite!

* Fear is one of the most dominant and powerful of all human emotions. It has been proven in recent scientific tests that the power of fear is sufficient, under certain conditions, to destroy completely the reasoning ability of the intellect. Fear is capable of plunging a person into a land of unreality, in which the mind is liable to disintegrate completely. Thus Sergi, with the aid of his devilish ray, had literally killed his victims with their own fear.—Ed.

"And Moritz," Sergi went on calmly, "had a small, natural subconscious fear that would be part of any musician—deafness. My ray treatments brought this out to an overpowering terror. He became certain he *was* going deaf. He couldn't stand the thought. He died. Young Annabelle Bordeaux was beautiful, talented. Her natural fear, living only in the subconscious, was loss of her beauty, loss of her talent, and the fear of aging. I accentuated this until it became an obsession. It was all she could think of, her world of dreadful fear. She took poison rather than go on living that way."

I felt horribly sick at my stomach.

"Mrs. Harrison Green," Sergi went on, musingly now, "was a little bit different. Her subconscious fear was that her husband's political life, nation-wide greatness, would disrupt her especially happy family life. Of course, it wasn't doing so, and never would have. But the fear was there, deep in her subconscious mind. My ray treatments lifted it from the subconscious and made it her dominant waking dread. Finally she was certain it was happening. She leaped to her death."

WENDY'S eyes had closed and her head rolled limply. She'd fainted. And then Sergi stepped over to the wall and pressed a button. There was a humming in the corner of the room, a humming right above the huge table over there. And from apertures in the ceiling, five round, copper globes appeared. They looked like intrinsically wired klieg lamps. The humming stopped, and they all pointed down on the table.

"My ray machines," Sergi explained, "completely bathe my treatment table in their beams. They bring forth fear. They will bring forth *your* dominant fear very shortly. Then I shall lock

you in a room and give you a gun."

I wet my lips.

"You'll die, Sergi. You'll end up in the chair. You haven't a chance to get away with this."

Doctor Sergi smiled.

"You make a mistake in trying to frighten me. I am immune to fear of any sort. Through the mastery of my great mind, I, Sergi, have eliminated every trace of fear from my subconscious mind. I fear nothing. How else would I have been able to work under those rays?"

"What do you want, Sergi," I demanded. "If it's money you're after—"

"Money!" the man scoffed. "I seek power. And I will have it. This is but the beginning; all this is but experiment. Eventually, through these fear rays I shall dominate nations, armies, the world! I, Sergi, will be the master of the universe!"

"You're mad!" I snarled. "You're utterly insane!"

A flicker knifed those round bright eyes—a peculiar flicker.

"You will see," he grated. "Your fear is the thought that something will happen to this girl. You will be under my ray treatments within another few moments. That fear will rule you when I send those rays probing through your brain. You will kill yourself!"

"You monstrous madman!" I cried. "Damn your insane mind!"

Sergi wheel.

"I will be back in a moment," he snarled. "We will see then who is mad." The door slammed behind him.

Wendy's eyes were fluttering open, she looked uncomprehendingly around. Then recollection returned to her.

"Dake, oh, Dake!" she cried.

But I had an idea, an idea as wild, as crazy, as impossible as everything else that had happened in these past hours. It was a chance.

"Wendy." I snapped, "Listen, Baby. For the love of God, listen!"

And then I talked, rapidly, desperately, explaining my idea, outlining our only plan of action. I finished just as Sergi's hand turned the knob on the door and he stepped into the room once more. Wendy had only time to nod to me that she was game, that she'd try.

Sergi was in the room, looking suspiciously at both of us.

"Wendy, Baby," I said, "this is the finest dinner I've ever had. And the music, Honey, is tops. Would you like to dance?"

Wendy shook her head gravely.

"Not just now, Dake. Let's just sit here and look at the others. It's been so long since we've had a chance to talk."

I COULD see Sergi, from the corner of my eye, staring uncomprehendingly at us. But neither of us looked in his direction. Neither of us gave any indication that he was in the room.

"Waiter!" I called, raising my head and looking to my right. "More champagne, please!"

"Oh, Dake," Wendy protested, "don't you think you've had enough?"

"Never enough champagne,, Baby," I answered. "At least not on the night of our anniversary. Say, I'd really like to dance, Hon. That music is too tempting to ignore."

"In a minute, then, Dake," Wendy promised.

"What is this?" Sergi thundered bewilderedly.

I looked right through him.

"Like rhumbas, Wendy?" I asked.

"Love 'em," Wendy answered. "And as much as I love this dessert. I think I'll have to push it aside. I'm stuffed."

"Stop!" Sergi shouted, voice quavering into near hysteria.

"Desserts will never hurt your figure,

Baby," I said. "You should have more desserts and less salads."

Sergi rushed to me. His face was flushed. His round eyes were glazed.

"This is an act!" he screamed. "This is a fool's act!" He raised his hand above his head.

"Let's dance," Wendy said, "now!"

And Doctor Sergi, face suddenly ashen, clutched at his wrinkled throat, pitching face forward to the floor. From the way he lay there I knew he wasn't breathing. I knew he was dead!

I looked swiftly at Wendy. Her eyes were closed. The poor kid had fainted again. But she'd played her role—God how she'd played her role!

And Sergi's fear had stopped his heart, had killed him. It was the fear I'd recognized in his eyes for a flickering instant each time I'd called him a madman, each time I'd said he was insane. It was the same fear I'd suspected he might have had when he babbled about his great mind and the mastery it would have over the world. It was the fear of losing his most priceless possession. It was the fear of madness, of losing his mind!

It was the one fear his mind had

never eliminated.

And our acting, insane though it had been, had made Sergi suspect his own sanity for just long enough to let the constant exposure he'd had beneath his own ray machines take that flickering subconscious doubt and raise it to an overwhelming dread. A dread a hundred times stronger than the dread he'd instilled in others. A hundred times stronger because of his constant exposure to the rays. A dread that was horrible enough to choke the life from him.

* * *

CAPPERT and four circulation slug-gers from the *Morning Globe* found us in Sergi's laboratory at eight-thirty in the morning. The cabbie had delivered my note. But I couldn't help thinking how close my dear city editor came to finding a couple of corpses there instead of two very live and very shaky reporters.

And I couldn't help thinking, either, how close Wendy came to losing a marvelous husband—not to mention her life. For I'm still going to marry her someday. And between you and me, she's a little closer to realizing this fact . . .

« « TREE OYSTERS » »

MOST of us seem to have the strange idea that to find something unusual or fantastic we must travel to far and distant lands, but just stop and consider for one moment the simple little tree oyster—a product of our own United States—Florida to be exact. These oysters are a strange feature of Florida's swamps. They grow in clumps or groups, attaching themselves to the roots of mangrove trees. Half of the time they're in the water, and half of the time they're high and dry, as the tides ebb and flow every six hours.

Don't mistake the tree oyster for the ordinary type of oyster you find on your dinner table. The tree oyster is a special kind of oyster with special

tree-habiting characteristics, according to Dr. Fritz Haas, Curator of Lower Invertebrates (that family of the animal kingdom that lacks a solid backbone or vertebral column) at the Field Museum in Chicago. The ordinary dinner table oyster couldn't survive the repeated periods of dryness that the tree oyster does, but the ordinary oyster can live out of water about six hours, if the process is not repeated too often.

The tree oyster looks so much like a fungus growth or plant of some kind that most amateur scientists are apt to mistake it for a plant specimen; but now that we've told about this strange creature, we're sure you won't make that mistake.

Romance of the Elements - - - Helium



26 YEARS BEFORE

HELIUM WAS FOUND ON EARTH IT WAS DISCOVERED IN THE SUN! PIERRE JULES JANSSEN AND SIR WILLIAM LOCKYER, LOOKING THROUGH SPECTROSCOPES AT THE SUN'S CHROMOSPHERE, DURING AN ECLIPSE IN 1868 WERE AMAZED TO SEE THE BRIGHT YELLOW RAY OF AN UNKNOWN GAS . . .



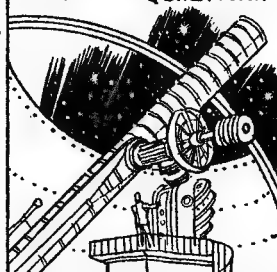
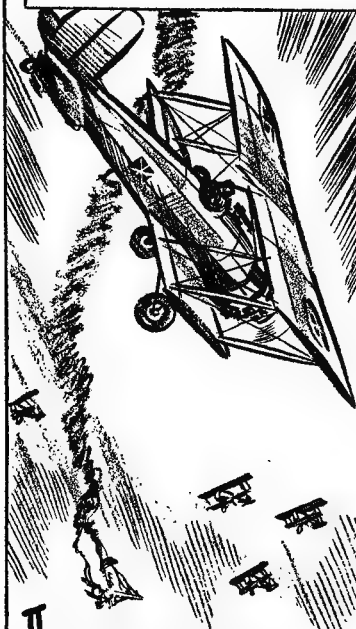
PROFESSOR RAMSAY

SIX YEARS LATER REPEATED HILLEBRAND'S EXPERIMENT; INSTEAD OF NITROGEN, HE SAW HELIUM. HILLEBRAND FAILED BECAUSE HIS PRESSURE AND ELECTRICAL CONDITIONS WERE NOT QUITE RIGHT.



"FIND HELIUM"

IN A TERRESTRIAL SUBSTANCE, SAID SCIENCE, AND WE'LL UNLOCK SOME STARTLING MYSTERIES." HILLEBRAND, IN WASHINGTON, JUST "MISSED THE BOAT" IN 1888 WHEN HE SAW ONLY NITROGEN'S FLUTED SPECTRA IN THE GAS THAT BUBBLED FROM A BIT OF URANINITE WHICH HE DROPPED INTO A TUBE OF SULPHURIC ACID.



"HOT" STAR

ATMOSPHERES ARE LARGELY HELIUM AND HYDROGEN; EVEN 100 MILES UP, THEY SAY, QUANTITIES OF HELIUM EXIST. BUT WE BREATHE AIR CONTAINING ONLY ONE PART HELIUM TO 185,000 BY VOLUME. MOST TERRESTRIAL HELIUM IS FORMED IN MINERALS BY RADIO-ACTIVE ELEMENTS.

IN 1914 BRITISH GUNNERS FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO SHOOT DOWN ONE PARTICULAR ZEPPELIN; "MUST BE USING HELIUM," REASONED THE ENGLISH; STARTED SEARCHING FOR HELIUM DEPOSITS. CHIEF SOURCES PROVED TO BE AMERICA'S OIL AND GAS FIELDS. TODAY, HELIUM HELPS PRESERVE FOOD; IS USED IN INCANDESCENT LAMPS. DEEP-SEA DIVERS STAY DOWN LONGER IF GIVEN WHIFFS OF HELIUM, MIXED WITH OXYGEN.

HELIUM is number 2 in the International Table of Atomic Weights. Its symbol is He and its atomic weight is 4. It is a colorless, odorless gas. In liquid form its boiling point is -268.5° , lower than any other substance. It is incombustible, and with 92% of the lifting power of hydrogen, is valuable in lighter-than-air craft. It exists in most older rocks and minerals, in sea and river water, and in the upper air. Most of the world's known supply is in the United States.

(NEXT MONTH—The Romance of Iodine)

DOORWAY TO HELL

by Frank Patton

**Arnett Huston wasn't dead; yet here before
him yawned inferno—to enter if he pleased!**

(Synopsis of Part 1 on page 98)

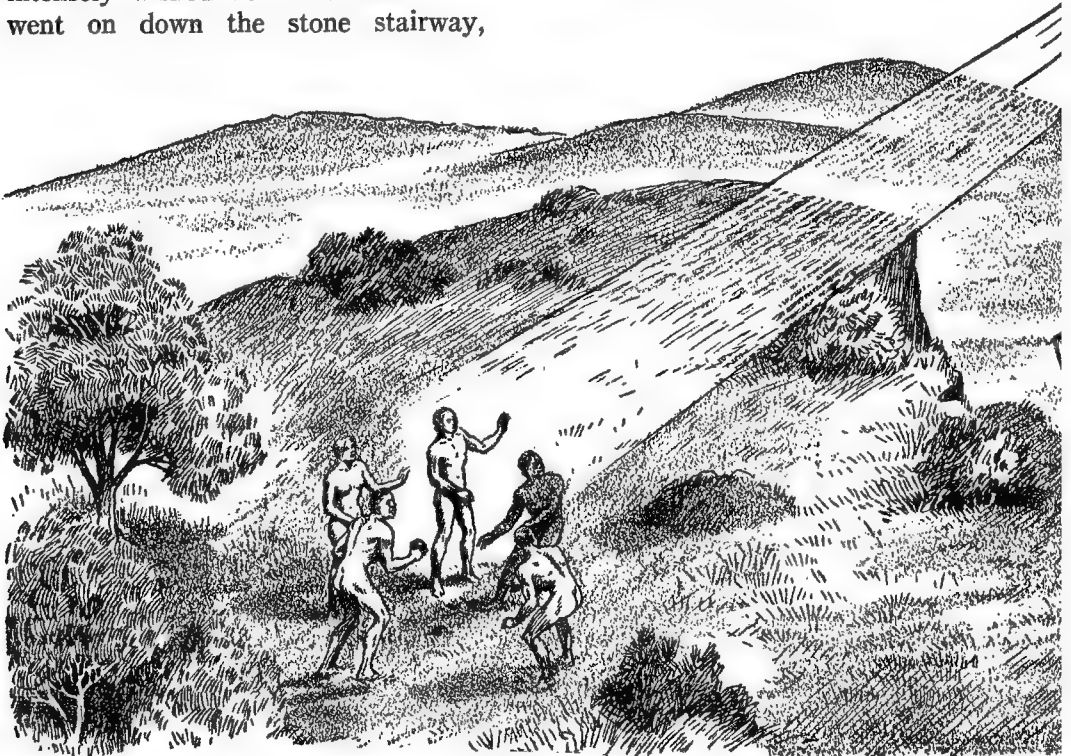
CHAPTER X

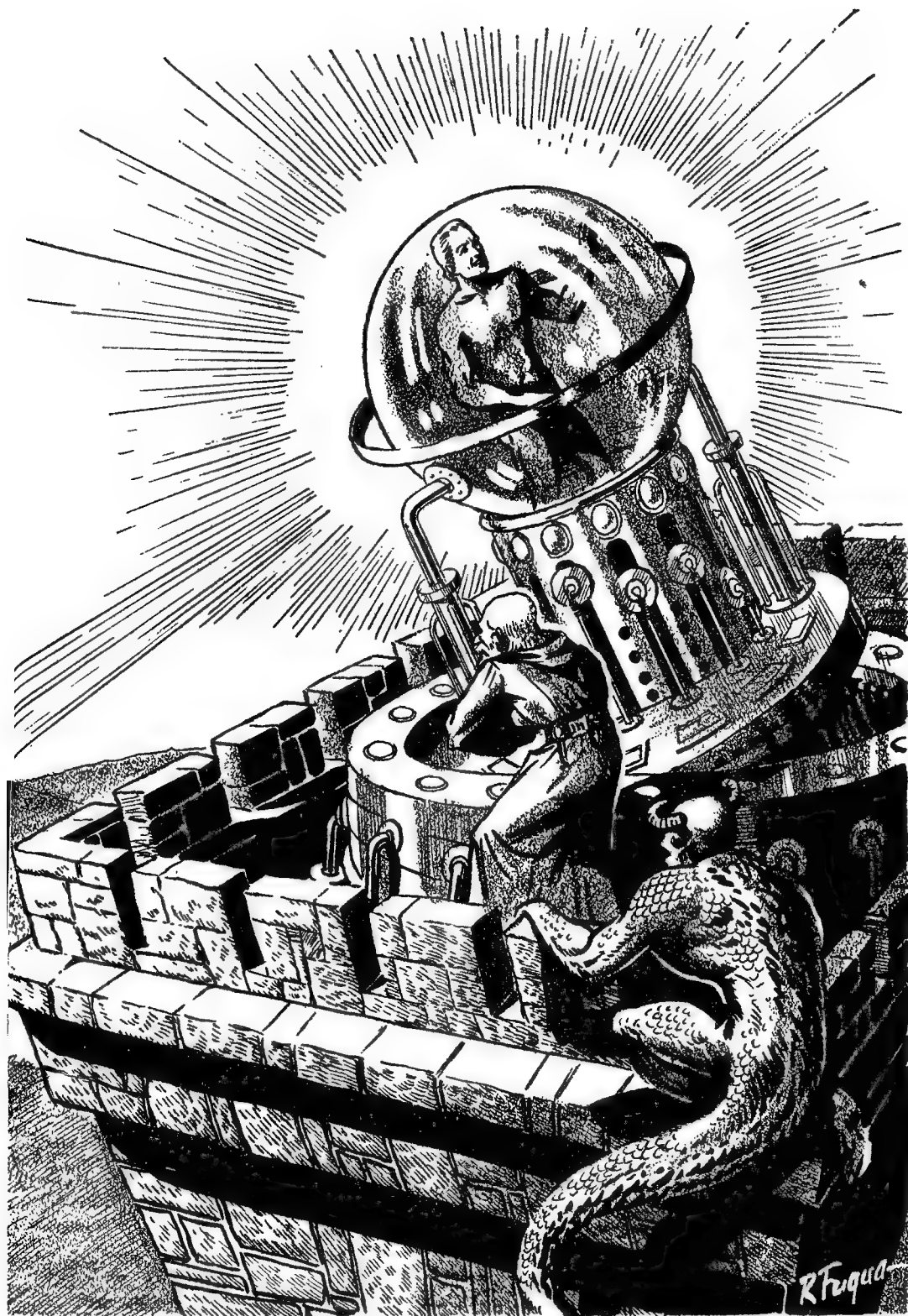
Into Inferno

“GORRITY! Sergeant Gorrity!”
shouted Arnett Huston.
“Where are you?”

He writhed beneath the intolerable itching, burning sensation that made of his skin an unwanted garment that he intensely wished he could shed. He went on down the stone stairway,

shrouded in smoke that cleared suddenly. He found himself standing on a level stone floor, in the midst of a brilliant red glare. But he wasn't standing amid the flames he had seen from the top of the stairway. There were no flames. And the itching sensation, the intense burning of his skin, was gone too. It was as if he had come through a wall of torture, and now stood miraculously unharmed on the other side.





A flash of light, and a man appeared in the globe

Stunned by the transition, he stared down at his body and gasped.

He was as nude as the day he had been born.

"Huston!" came a voice beside him in the red glare. "My God, Huston, what is this place?"

It was Gorrity. He stood peering around dazedly, his big hands still clutching the tommy-gun. Around his neck was a metal chain with a medal hung upon it. Otherwise he too was completely naked.

"I don't know," said Huston, staring

about, as completely an amazed look on his face as had Gorrity. "But wherever it is, it isn't the hell I have been brought up to believe in."

"No?" asked Gorrity. "Then what do you call that devil's causeway we just came down? If that wasn't hell, then there isn't any!"

All about them was an immense cavern, roofed over with a substance that seemed to be solid, illuminated red glass. There was light behind it, seeming to come from two distinct sources, as though powerful arclights were

Synopsis of part one:

While ARNETT HUSTON, newspaper reporter beating the downtown district for news, is buying a paper from PETEY JIMPSON, old newsstand proprietor, he witnesses the machine-gun killing of an unknown man directly before a pair of massive bronze doors permanently cemented in the side wall of the Merchant's City Bank. These doors, naturally, cannot be opened.

The killers, in their car, crash into a taxi and are captured by officer McCLINTOCK, traffic patrolman. However, when Huston returns his gaze to the corpse before the doors, it has disappeared. Nor is it possible that it could have been carried away, since no persons were near enough. Petey Jimpson who saw what happened, refuses to talk. He denies seeing anything at all, even a killing, and seems greatly terrified.

Officer McClintock, claiming also to have seen a man killed, is reprimanded by Sergeant GORRITY, who says bloodstains, washed away by the bank's handyman were just red paint, thrown there by vandals. McClintock, to avoid a layoff without pay, retracts his statements.

From McClintock, Huston learns that the captured men (named MIKE and ARTHUR), now in the hospital, are members of SHORTY PEARSON'S mob, and that a submachine-gun was found in the wrecked gang car. Huston visits the injured gangmen, but learns nothing, since the gangland lawyer has cautioned them to absolute denial, because their victim has miraculously and conveniently vanished from existence. But Huston has in his pocket three bullets dug from the carvings of the door.

There has been a killing, but where is the

body?

Huston scratches dried blood from beneath the sill of the door. Police chemists assure him it is human blood. Visiting MAX WELSON, president of the bank, Huston inspects the inside of the bank and assures himself that not even dynamite would budge the doors.

Returning to the newsdealer, Petey Jimpson, Huston gets him to confess that he believes himself to be the victim of hallucinations; that during the past six months he has seen twelve people go into those doors—has seen them open.

That night, Huston stands vigil at the door. A girl comes, searching for an address. She is unable to find it, although she pauses before the bronze doors. Huston discovers that she has come in answer to a letter from ELLEN WHITNEY, an old girl friend who disappeared three months ago very mysteriously. It is a plea for help, and a claim to being held prisoner at the address (which would be the bronze door if it were actually numbered) by JOHN ARKWAY. Huston learns from the girl (whose first name the letter tells him is ELAINE) that John Arkway died a year ago.

As this amazing statement comes from her lips, the door opens. A red glare fills the street. A nude girl stumbles forth. It is Ellen Whitney. Elaine throws her cloak over the girl, and the girl re-enters the doorway. The cloak burns away from her body. Elaine is hypnotized by a weird devilish monster, and enters also. Huston plunges forward too late. The door slams in his face, once more immovably cemented into solid stone.

Huston searches the police files of missing persons, finds the file of Ellen Whitney. From it he learns that the girl he met the night before, is ELAINE HARDWICKE, daughter of

trained upon the glass to set it afire with blinding red light.

The cavern was perhaps four hundred feet long, by half as wide, and obviously a natural formation, since no regularity was discernible.

The floor was bare, seemingly of rough, red-colored stone.

"Everything's so damn red," complained Gorrity, "I can't tell what's what. That light makes everything look the same."

Both of them turned to scan the other end of the cave, and Gorrity loosed a

muffled curse of surprise and dismay.

"Cripes," he said in panic. "A woman!"

Huston wheeled. He saw a figure clad in a long red robe. It seemed to be a tall, simply-clad woman, advancing toward them from an opening at the far end of the cave. Huston looked around in haste. They were a hundred feet from any concealment, even if the walls of the cave afforded one.

"Where'll we hide?" gasped Gorrity. "This ain't exactly the way for us to meet any dames!"

PETER HARDWICKE, prominent broker vanished three years ago, a police fugitive. He is accused of engineering a gigantic bond swindle called the Poker Flats swindle; a power project that never existed.

He confirms the death (by heart failure in his own home exactly two years after the disappearance of Peter Hardwicke) of John Arkway, who was the senior partner of the firm of Arkway & Hardwicke Company and later formed John Arkway, Inc.

Huston is accosted by a man named BILL, right hand man of Shorty Pearson, who is anxious to find Elaine Hardwicke. Huston tells him both girls are at the address of the door when Bill intimates that Ellen Whitney was kidnapped, supposedly by Shorty Pearson. Strangely enough Bill believes Huston's information, which leads Huston to suspect others know the door can be opened.

Going back to Petey Jimpson, Huston tells him that he has seen the door open and a girl go in. He accuses Jimpson of being the missing bond broker. Jimpson confesses after the revelation that it was his daughter who entered the door. Jimpson claims innocence of the Poker Flats swindle, says that John Arkway really engineered it and pinned the blame on him. He also tells of how John Arkway died of fright when he visited him, apparently from the grave. Why should John Arkway die in such a manner, unless he knew of the doorway? Is he really holding Ellen Whitney prisoner behind it? Is he really dead?

Jimpson and Huston determine to enter the door. But how to do it? Huston writes a fake letter, signs it John Arkway, and sends it to Shorty Pearson. Perhaps Pearson will open the door; if he knows the secret.

However, when Pearson and his gunmen arrive, late that night, Jimpson has a plan of his own to open the door. Death will open it. He shoots Pearson through the head. The door opens. Before Huston can prevent, he enters, and the door once more shuts. Jimpson and the dead Pearson are gone.

Huston finds a peculiar whistle which Pearson was blowing upon. It is (according to the gangman in the hospital, whom Huston again visits) Pearson's 'lucky piece'. He also learns, by surprising the gangman, that the first man killed before the door was HARVEY ANDERSON, secret husband of Ellen Whitney who inherited the Arkway millions upon his death. Apparently Ellen Whitney was very close to Arkway's affections also, which explains her unwillingness to clear Peter Hardwicke of the charges against him, which she must have known were false.

Gorrity, on a warrant sworn out by JOE FANTINO, proprietor of a tiny restaurant across the street from the bank, rounds up the members of the Shorty Pearson gang. Huston, by a ruse, gets an admission from one of them that Pearson *was* killed before the door. Now, Gorrity, convinced that killings actually have happened, offers to cooperate with Huston in solving the mystery. Huston invites him to try that night to enter the door with him. He has a clew as to the means of entry used by Pearson.

At the door, he blows the gangster's toy whistle. The door opens, obviously under the effect of the strange pitch of the whistle. Gorrity and Huston enter. Huston sees Gorrity's clothes begin to burn from his body. The door slams shut behind them. They have entered hell!

Huston gulped, then he grinned wryly.

"Maybe not," he said. "But it looks like we'll have to. It seems to me that it's *her* situation, not ours. Any possible exit is entirely up to her . . ."

HE stood waiting, while Gorrity fumbled his tommy-gun in obvious embarrassment. Suddenly he stopped fidgeting.

"Say, that ain't no woman," he burst out. "It's an old gent with a long red beard."

"I'd say both the beard and the robe were white," said Huston. "It's this red light makes everything look red. Now, for instance, I'm sure you're a white man, but you out-Indian the Indians to a fare-thee-well. You look like a boiled lobster!"

He stopped speaking, and they both watched the old man come forward. He was looking at them with a frown on his features. When he reached them he stopped and scanned them a moment.

"You will be the last," he said finally.

"What?" asked Gorrity blankly. "The last *what*?"

"The last living men to come through the door," said the old man. He held up his hand. In it was the little whistle that had belonged to Shorty Pearson. "I have the key back now. It will not leave my possession again. I've had too much trouble with it. Never could understand why they wanted it made."

"Who're 'they'?" asked Huston. "How'd you get that whistle? What is this place? Who are you?"

The old man glowered at him.

"*They* are the technicians" he said sourly, "and you're as nosey as they are. You ask too many questions."

"Can you blame me?" asked Huston.

"Well, no. But if you had this whistle—which I picked up on the stair-

way where you dropped it, to answer one of your questions—why must you ask what this place is? You ought to know."

"When I came in I thought it was hell," said Huston. "Now I don't know."

"You thought right," said the old man testily. "It is hell, or what you confounded other-worlders call hell. But then, none of you could ever see straight. Horns and a tail . . . humph!

"What're you talking about?" Gorrity put in. His Irish face was a mask of bewilderment. "You're talking in riddles, Grandpa."

"Just because a lot of vibrations tangle up your vision, and you can't tell the difference between sound waves and light waves, you spread the rumor that I've got a forked tail, and horns, and you can very well see that I haven't. In fact, I haven't even much hair. I'd rather be called bald than horned."

Gorrity gulped and went into a coughing spell; finally recovered, and choked out:

"Are you trying to tell us you're the devil?" he uttered.

"Satan, Beelzebub, Mephistopheles . . . take your pick!" snapped the old man. "Every hundred years or so, some other of your bilge-brained people coins another name for me, just because they see me through the door at times when I have to make an inspection of the mechanism. I'm getting sick and tired of it. My name's Enoch, plain and simple."

"Wait a minute, Enoch," said Huston a bit weakly. "This is all foggy to us. Would you mind being a good fellow and starting from the beginning?"

"I haven't time right now," the old man snorted. "But if you'll come along, I'll give you a few pointers as you go along. Not bad, you two, at that. Deserve an explanation. Haven't asked

me yet how it is that I talk English . . ." The old man waved a hand and turned toward the entrance of the cavern. Gorrity and Huston followed him.

"I TALK a couple dozen languages," the old man went on. "Have to, to keep things from getting congested at the door. Which reminds me—haven't had a chance to use my Sanskrit lately. What's the matter with those people; don't they die any more?"

"Sanskrit?" Huston's eyes widened. "Say, that language hasn't been used for a heck of a lot of centuries. The race that spoke it is gone . . ."

"You don't say! What happened to them? Get washed out in a sound wave?"

Gorrity looked at Huston, held up a finger and twirled it suggestively around his ear.

"Batty!" he whispered. "Didja hear that? Washed out in a *sound* wave!"

Huston motioned him for silence and Gorrity subsided, walking patiently along beside Huston, his flat, bare feet slapping against the stone floor with every step.

"It's all very simple," said Enoch. "Your world is the lowest in the scale of creation. People come into being there. They are born. Very messy. I've always considered it. Too much bother. Waste twenty years growing up before you can take a place in even the silly civilization you folks have.

"Here, in the second stage world, people enter a new life with all the limitations purged from them at the doorway, and in the area of vibrations. That's what happened when your clothes seemed to burn off you.

"The area is controlled by myself, from the tower, of course, but sometimes I have trouble with the Satyrs and the Imps, and especially with the Harpies. We have other names for

them, but I'll call them by your own silly designations for your convenience. And they *don't* look like you think they do! Can't see through a sound wave . . ."

The old man's voice became a grumble for a moment, then he resumed.

"The technicians know their business, though. I've got gadgets up there that I get quite a kick out of running. You'll get to see a few of them in a minute, soon's we get out of the cave."

He walked on in silence, and they came to the ruddy, red wall. They passed through a corridor about ten feet long, then suddenly were out in daylight. Huston and Gorrity stopped as though they had been shot in their tracks, then frozen stiff so they could not fall.

"Cripes," said Gorrity, swallowing hard, "*two* suns!"

CHAPTER XI

The 'Living' and the 'Dead'

"I LIKE this part of it," chuckled the old man. "It's like sitting someone down in a chair that isn't there. Knocks the wind of other-world people's sails. Not that two suns ought to be anything so surprising. I can't see it myself, but anyway this gives me a chance for a dramatic entry every time I have to deliver one of you people to the technicians."

Huston barely heard what Enoch was saying. He was looking bewilderedly about the valley in which he found himself. It was several miles long, by at least two wide, and rimmed on all sides by gigantic red-glass cliffs. The sky above was a saffron yellow, and the strangest feature of the whole odd scene was the fact that that sky held two incredibly brilliant and incredibly blue suns. And around the suns, the sky

was a brilliant green forming a halo that faded away by successive color stages into the yellow of the sky.

In the center of the valley was a huge metal tower with a great transparent globe mounted upon its peak. At the base of the ball were many strange looking mechanisms, all reached by metal catwalks and guarded by gleaming rails. Various projectors seemed to be pointing ominous muzzles at all sections of the valley.

"That's my control tower," said Enoch proudly. "I control the door, the vibration ranges of the transitory area, and the traverse lanes to all parts of the planet."

Huston shook off the spell of amazement that had gripped him.

"Listen, Enoch, I don't know what all this is, but I'm sure it isn't hell. It's not Earth, but I'm equally sure it isn't any of old Sol's family . . . unless he's suddenly acquired a brother."

Enoch shook his head.

"I've been trying to tell you that you other-worlders can't see any farther than the width of a sound wave from high A over high C! Just because you can't interpret a simple scene, you build up a whole legend and superstition that this world is a place of raging flames, prancing creatures with forked tails and horns, and half-human harpies!

"The fact is, the shift from your vibration range to ours distorts the light waves, makes them fluctuate, and you say: 'flames!'. You see a common ordinary vulture, and you call it a 'harpie' and give it the breasts of a woman. You see me occasionally fixing something on the door, or picking up things you carelessly drop on the way down, like that key I've been hunting so long and give me a pair of horns . . .'"*

"Key?"

"The whistle."

"Oh. But to get to another subject,

Enoch, you mentioned a few minutes ago about delivering us to the technicians. Just what does that mean? I don't think I want to be delivered to anybody. We came here to find some people, and we intend to find them. People who are going back to our own world with us."

"If the technicians want to send you!" said Enoch. "Don't get on your high horse about what you're going to do. No one leaves here unless the technicians send them. Of course, you two come under a peculiar classification. You haven't changed your Life

* Here we have the clue to all the legends and superstitions that have arisen through the centuries concerning hell. Certainly it is reasonable to assume that if any contact with the after world is possible, and has occurred, that interpretations of it in our own worldly manner are bound to be erroneous. Whatever the nature of an after-world is, it certainly must be vastly different. If it is on another plane, or dimension, or vibrational range, our senses would interpret all we see by chance in the only way possible—according to our own standards and reactions. In a world where sound waves are visible, as is here implied, what would we describe such a wave to be? As a flickering flame? Very likely. How would we describe strange creatures alien to our own dimensions, should we see them? Perhaps only as cross-sections of the whole, or perhaps through distortion, as almost anything. It would seem that human imagination has added much to what may have been seen.

The existence of hell is a legend, a superstition, a belief, unfounded by anything of a solid scientific nature. And yet, there must be some reality behind it all. Such persistent legends and beliefs must somewhere be based on an actuality. Is hell another world, next to ours, but invisible, except at rare instances, simply because none of our senses can normally perceive it, or because its physical laws are entirely different from ours?

Thus, the harpies we believe to be winged creatures with the head and breasts of a woman, may be simply the vultures of this other world, dressed up in our own fancy, imagination, and faulty interpretation. Is not the varied conception of the devil the result of an unclear revelation of a form, a figure, to which we have added known and more believable attributes, simply because we cannot understand what we have seen, and ourselves embellish in the telling so that other persons are not too incredulous? Are not the imps simply animals or beings whose real form we cannot actually envisage our alien senses?—Ed.

Vibrations. There are three others who are in the same classification . . . I suppose they are the one's you're after?"

"Two girls and an old man . . ."

"Yes."

"Where are they?" asked Huston eagerly. "Take us to them now!"

ENOCH grinned at him.

"Wouldn't you like some clothes first?"

Huston reddened.

"Certainly. If they don't burn off us every time we step through a doorway."

"Well, come on then. The tower's where you go first. Then I'll send you to the technicians."

"Can't we skip that," said Huston impatiently. "I'd like to find those three people first . . ."

"I've already sent *them* to the technicians," said Enoch darkly. "I have to send everybody like you there."

"What about us makes us so different," asked Gorritty in asperity. "I'm beginning to get hopped up on that technician business."

Enoch led the way toward the tower.

"Pretty touchy for a pair that has no right here," he grumbled. "But if you want to know, you two came in illegally. You aren't dead as you call it. You haven't changed your vibration range. You lost your clothes because they were manufactured of "dead" materials. Therefore, they simply were canceled out in the vibration area. But you still have your other-world bodies—slightly changed I'll admit, and in a way you'll soon find out—which weren't canceled out. You don't fit here, on this world, and you can't go back to your own and stay. You can't stay anywhere, except in this valley, and I won't have that. Can't have a nudist colony frisking around the valley. Gives incoming other-worlders the wrong im-

pression . . ."

Enoch stopped some distance from the tower, stood still, pointed a tiny instrument he took from his belt at the tower. A beam of lavender light stabbed down, enveloped them in a circle of color.

A giddy sensation of light-headedness gripped Huston and he reeled. Then there was the sensation of motion, and abruptly he found himself standing inside the glass globe atop the tower. Enoch and Gorritty—who was gasping in startled surprise—were beside him.

Enoch led the way down a stairway into the interior of the tower and opened a door.

"Clothes in there," he said briefly. "Put them on while I get the traverse beam ready."

Gorritty and Huston stood alone in a tiny room of metal, gazing blankly at one another. Huston drew a long breath.

"What an elevator!" he said in awed tones. Even Radio City hasn't got one that can stand up to that!"

"That what it was, an elevator?" asked Gorritty stupidly. "I just got dizzy, and there I was, in that glass ball. Why we musta went a mile in something under a second!"

Huston stared around. There were several piles of garments, similar to the one Enoch, keeper of the tower, wore. Huston picked one up, studied its intricacies, then awkwardly pulled it on over his head. Gorritty grinned at him, then put his on by stepping into it and pulling it up around him.

"My wife puts on her nightgown like you do, Huston," he said. "Very pretty. You must wear one yourself. You know how to do it."

Huston flushed.

"Can it, you big flatfoot," he said. "We've got things to do. And keep that tommy-gun with you. We might

need it."

Enoch appeared again and motioned to them to follow him.

"Ready to go," he said.

They followed him out onto a catwalk, and Enoch indicated a platform with several low benches on it.

"Sit on those," he directed. "You'll be there in no time . . ." He stopped talking and peered down into the valley. "Fiddlesticks!" he exclaimed in annoyance.

Huston peered downward also. He saw a group of human figures. They had just come out of the opening that led to the crimson cave. They were running from something, and in a moment Huston saw what it was. It was one of the green-scaled monsters of the doorway.

ENOCH acted quickly. Under his direction at the control panels of the tower, a beam of lavender swung down on the running figures. Then abruptly one of them disappeared. Huston whirled around, rubbed his eyes as he saw the nude form of a man materialize in the glass globe immediately above him. Then one by one the others appeared. One of them was a woman, and Huston started erect. She was neither Ellen Whitney nor Elaine Hardwicke, and Huston sat down again, reddened, and turned away. But as he did so, the whole group vanished from the globe as Enoch punched another button on his control board. Huston saw a pale orange beam stretching from the tower to the hills at the edge of the valley and over.

"That's that," said Enoch. "They'll never know what hit them. Probably still vibration-area dazed anyway. They're legal entry."

A yell from Gorrity froze Huston. Then he whipped around and saw the police sergeant lifting his tommy-gun

and pulling the trigger. Nothing happened. The mechanism worked, but the gun refused to fire. Gorrity swore, and lowered it, a look of baffled alarm on his Irish features.

Over the rail behind Enoch Huston saw one of the ugly monsters of the doorway clambering toward the old man. Enoch turned now, too, and his eyes widened. Once more he acted swiftly. He whirled a beam projector about and a lavender ray lanced out. It caught the monster full, and held him suspended in the air. Then with the speed of light, it whipped him down to the valley floor and deposited him before the entrance to the cavern.

Even from the tower Huston could hear its howl of rage and bafflement mingled with terror, then it disappeared.

"Whew!" he said. "Grandpa, you sure can work these gadgets!"

Behind him Gorrity was equally wide-eyed.

"You said it!" he gasped. Then his attention returned to the tommy-gun. "But if I ever get back, I'll skin somebody alive. Every shell in this thing is a dud! Firing pin hit thirty of them, and not one fired!" He tossed the gun into a corner under the great globe in disgust.

"They never work here," said Enoch in an explanatory voice. "Vibrations are different here; not even explosions work the same. But now, let's get this over with."

He stuck out a hand toward the controls.

"Wait . . ." began Huston, but he was too late. A sensation of dizziness assailed him, he fell back on the low bench, and lay staring up at a translucent glass ceiling. For a stricken instant he lay there, then he heaved himself erect with a startled cry at realization that the saffron yellow sky

was no longer above him with its two brilliant blue suns. Instead he was miraculously in the most amazing and fantastic room he had ever seen. And looking down at him was a face that he recognized with a stunned surprise.

"*John Arkway!*" he exclaimed.

CHAPTER XII

Arkway and the Technicians

"**W**HO are you?" asked John Arkway. "How did you get in?" There was a sharpness in his tone that suddenly was irritating to Huston. But before he could retort, a sudden sickening wave of nausea swept over him. Sweat broke out on his body, and he groaned and fell back.

"I'm sick," he gasped between groans.

Arkway stepped hastily across the laboratory, and returned in an instant with a glass full of greenish-tinted liquid into which he shook a powder that foamed and seemed to sparkle almost electrically.

"Drink this," he said sharply. "Quick, before it stops foaming!"

Huston obeyed, and a curious electrical tingling went through his body. The nausea was arrested with a shock, but the vertigo remained for a few more moments. Then, when it had subsided, Huston sat erect with a sigh of relief.

"Whew," he said. "That was really something."

Arkway regarded him a moment with a frown.

"How'd you get here?" he asked again.

"I don't exactly know," said Huston. "A guy by the name of Enoch sent me, I think. Pretty fast trip, too!"

"I don't mean that," said Arkway impatiently. "How'd you get through the door?"

Huston clambered down from the strange slab on which he lay and stood facing the ex-bond broker.

"So you know about the door?" he asked slowly.

"Of course I know about the door," said Arkway impatiently. "Don't we all come through it, one way or the other?"

"Yes," admitted Huston, "one way or the other. How'd you come in?"

"Legally," snapped Arkway. "But you didn't. And I want to know how!"

"Oh, you do? Well, now, what makes you think I didn't come in legally?"

"Don't be stupid. What do you think that drink I gave you was for?"

"I'm sure I don't know."

"To neutralize your electro-therometric resistance, of course."

"That's as clear as mud," acknowledged Huston. "But if you say so . . ."

Arkway advanced menacingly.

"*How'd you get through that door?*" he snarled.

"I knocked," said Huston.

Then he added deliberately,

"And I knocked because I wanted to come in to find Ellen Whitney, and Elaine Hardwicke, and her father, Peter Hardwicke."

Arkway's face hardened.

"You know them?"

"Obviously. And I also know you—know that you framed Hardwicke, and that you kidnaped Ellen Whitney . . ."

"That's a lie! She came because she wanted to."

Huston looked amused.

"Here?" Came *here?*"

Arkway's face went icy.

"That," he said deliberately, "is something we won't discuss any longer. You will never leave this place alive, nor will Miss Hardwicke and her father. I shall see to that."

"You've seen to a lot of things," said

Huston softly, "you and Shorty Pearson. I've never been able to figure out where he comes into your scheme of things; but at least he'll never operate on the outside again."

"What do you mean?"

"What do you mean, what do I mean?" returned Huston puzzledly. "Don't you *know*?"

"What are you driving at?"

"Shorty came through the door too, all nice and legal-like," Huston said. "Shot through the face."

ARKWAY leaped forward.

"Who shot him?"

"Hasn't he told you?"

"I haven't seen him," snarled Arkway. "The technicians get only special cases. He's probably been sent to an adaptational area."

Huston looked interested.

"A cheap crook like you a technician?"

"Never mind that," snapped Arkway. "What about Pearson?"

"Nothing," said Huston blandly. "He's legal, and I don't give a damn about him. He can stay right where he is. I'm interested only in seeing justice done. And to me that means only one thing: getting back to the other-world with Miss Hardwicke, Miss Whitney, and Peter Hardwicke—and with your kind help, to a source of evidence which will positively clear Peter Hardwicke of the frame you hung on him on that Poker Flats deal."

For an instant Arkway was silent, then he laughed loudly.

"Got it all figured out, haven't you?" he said. "You poor fish. What you don't know about this setup would fill the Britannica. Well, my dashing Robin Hood, I have a little surprise for you. If you'll kindly step this way, I'll unfold a little mystery about this world for you."

Huston hesitated a moment, then followed. Arkway walked across the strange laboratory to an apparatus mounted in one wall. He flicked on switches, spun dials, and several large tubes glowed with a pale orange light. Then he turned to Huston.

"Come over here where you can see the television screen," he invited. "It will interest you."

Huston saw a square of frosted glass light up, and on it appeared an amazingly faithful reproduction of a green jungle-land as seen from the air. It was a fantastic tangle of huge trees, seemingly of every possible description.

"It's crazy!" gasped Huston. "None of those trees could exist together. Why there's even a group of carboniferous ferns . . . conifers . . . elms . . . oaks . . . redwood . . . and a lot I can't even identify."

"Yes," said Arkway. "That's just one of the adaptational areas. A primitive one, to be sure, but peculiarly suited to you; and besides, it's the most distant one. You'll have a hell of a time, to resort to a pun, getting out of there!" And Arkway pulled a switch.

As he pulled it, Huston realized that he had been standing on a metal disc set into the floor. But as the realization struck him, so did a beam of orange light. His whole brain seemed filled with orange flame, then it vanished. He leaped toward Arkway.

"Damn you!" he grated — and plunged headlong into a giant fern.

He reeled back, dazed by the blow on his head, and brought up against the bole of another prehistoric flora.

He was no longer in the strange scientific laboratory. He was no longer under the translucent ceiling; but beneath a deep green sky that seemed almost as dark as night on Earth, yet

held an eerie glow that made nearby objects stand out like ghosts.

"He did it," gasped Huston. "The dirty skunk sent me to this damned jungle!"

FOR several moments Huston stood still in the forest gloom. Then he grunted. What was it Arkway had said about an adaptational area? What did that mean? Huston stared around at the fantastic trees that surrounded him. Nowhere was there a tree that *should* be here, to judge from its neighbors. Plant life that was millions of years apart in Earthly evolution grew simultaneously here in a confused tangle.

"*This* is an adaptational area," said Huston aloud. "But I still don't see adaptational of what!"

"Of *you*," said a voice beside him.

Huston leaped into the air and whirled around.

"Dammit," he said, "don't scare a man like that! This spooky woods is bad enough, without . . ." he stopped speaking and choked.

"*You!*" he gasped out.

"Sure, me," said the man who stood beside him. "But does that mean you know me?"

"Shorty Pearson!" exclaimed Huston.

The gangster frowned.

"Quit gapin' like a fish outta water," he said in irritation. "This surprise act is getting less and less funny. So I am Shorty Pearson, so what?"

"Nothing, I guess," said Huston. "Except that I didn't expect to find you here. Whatever these adaptational areas are, I supposed there were a lot of them, and the chances of you and me being in the same one, and in the same place in one, were just a little too much to expect."

"For your info, guy," snapped Pear-

son, "these adaptational areas are a sort of Aberdeen."

"A what?"

"Proving ground. If you can make the grade in one of these places, you get a place with the regular mob, doing something you're fitted for. Me, I haven't done any proving so far, except to run like hell from a monster which ain't got any right to be alive, even in this screwy King Kong land."

"Oh," said Huston. "I get it. So that's how Arkway got to be a technician."

"Whozzat, you say?" barked Pearson.

"You heard right," said Huston. "John Arkway, your old pal. He's the rat that shot me out to this green hell."

"You mean he's one of those technician guys," asked Pearson incredulously, "like the guy that put me on the beam?"

"Yes," said Huston. "And he sent me out to the wildest and farthest adaptational area of all. He thinks I won't get back. Well, we'll see about that! I . . ."

"Look," said Pearson, grabbing Huston by the arm. "Less talk and a little more running—*right now and fast!*"

With the words he plunged into the densest part of the jungle before them. Huston didn't need to see the monster that was bearing down on him—the thudding trembling of the earth beneath his feet, jarring to the tread of it, was all that was necessary. He dived after the fleeing gangster.

BEHIND him as he ran was a crashing of underbrush, the crackle of snapping tree-trunks, and then the bull-throated, soul-shaking roar of an animal such as no living man had ever heard before.

"In here!" came Pearson's hoarse whisper.

An arm yanked him into a cave, a black hole in the eerie greenness of the strange night.

Huston stood panting beside the gangster in the dark as the monster stamped up and down outside, then finally roared away into the night.

"He's gone," said Pearson. "That's the second time he's been on my tail. Must smell meat."

"Adaptational area!" breathed Huston. "What a name for *this* place! The only job a man'd be fitted for after this place would be lion-tamer for Barnum and Bailey."

"Maybe not," said Pearson. "This is a screwy place all around. Now take for instance Arkway being a technician. I don't get that. He didn't know nothing but stocks and bonds and juggling figures around so other people would take the rap."

"Like Peter Hardwicke, eh?" said Huston.

"Look," said Pearson. "Who are you? How do you know so much?"

Huston looked at the gangster calculatingly in the gloom a moment, then he smiled inwardly. He began speaking:

"Shorty," he said, "you and me had better get together. We've both been railroaded off here in the woods, while somebody else grabs the gravy. Maybe if I tell you a little story, you'll understand what I mean. Maybe we can help each other out a bit . . ."

"Go ahead," growled Pearson, "but it'd better be a good story. You been saying things that are too damned personal to be noised around."

"Lot of harm it'd do you here!" laughed Huston. "This ain't exactly our own world, you know. People back there ain't going to care about *us* any more!"

"I ain't so sure," said Pearson.

Huston peered at him.

"What do you mean?"

"Never mind," snapped Pearson. "Start spilling that story you was gonna tell me."

"Okay. First, you got a special delivery letter from Arkway the other night, asking you to come to the door in the bank at one a.m. So you came, bringing three of your boys with you. Then you stood beside the door and blew on the whistle that you use to open the door, and waited for it to open . . ."

The gang leader stiffened in the dark, and Huston could see the surprise in his posture even in the blackness of the cave.

"Go on," said Pearson hoarsely.

"Well, a guy came across the street and talked to you. He said he had come in answer to a call from Arkway too. And with Arkway being dead a year it looked pretty funny to you. Anyway, you made believe you didn't know what this old guy was talking about. Then, before you knew what he was up to, he pulled a gun and shot you through the head."

"The rat!" raged Pearson. "The dirty, stinking rat!"

Huston waited a moment, suggestively. Then:

"You want to know who the *real* rat was? Who really put you on the spot?"

PEARSON advanced through the gloom and his fingers tightened around Huston's arm.

"Who?" he asked savagely. "*Who?* Just tell me his name, and by God, not even those big roaring babies out there will keep me from getting back and paying him up in full!"

"His name," said Huston evenly, "was John Arkway."

Pearson was stone. He stood immovably for a long moment, then his voice came huskily, suspiciously.

"How do you know?"

Huston took a long shot in the dark.

"Because the man who shot you was Peter Hardwicke. John Arkway sent him out of the door to get you. He told me himself."

Pearson leaped at Huston.

"Sent him *out!*" he roared. "You mean . . . ?"

"Didn't you just hint there was a way out of this world, back to our own?" asked Huston shrewdly.

Pearson was panting in excitement.

"Yes, I said that. But I didn't know Arkway had managed it yet. He sent word to me that he was working on it, and for me to get the set-up ready so we could start work again. He had plenty nice plans . . ."

"But they didn't include you!" put in Huston.

"No!"

"What are you going to do about it?"

Pearson smacked a fist into his palm.

"What am I gonna do about it?" he asked with fury in his voice. "I'm going to find that damn beam, and ride it right back to the technicians—and when I get there, hell's going to start poppin' here that'll be the real thing!"

"Me too," said Huston cheerfully. "I got a couple of scores to settle myself."

Pearson stuck out a hand.

"Two's better than one," he acknowledged. "Shake on it, and let's get going. I got a hunch where we can pick up the beam."

CHAPTER XIII

The World of "Hell"

THE deep green gloom of the jungle was rapidly becoming a brighter hue as they strode along beneath dripping ferns that drenched them to the

skin within a half-hour.

"Sun's coming up," commented Huston.

"*Both* of 'em," said Pearson. "Funniest damn thing you ever saw. In the daytime the sky is yellow, and at night it's green. And the suns are blue."

"Cockeyed," said Huston. "Ought to be the other way around."

"Huh?"

"Never mind. When we going to get to this place where you said the beam comes close over the cliffs?"

"Pretty soon now. But we'll have some work to do when we get there. Have to chop down a couple of trees and build a platform so we can get up there. It's about thirty feet above the ground."

"With jackknives, I suppose," said Huston.

"Don't be funny." Pearson growled.

"We ain't even got knives. But some of these ferns are easy to knock over. Like cork, and brittle. Light too. We can knock a lot of 'em over and pile 'em up until we get high enough to jump into the beam."

Huston frowned.

"Somehow this don't seem as though it's going to be that easy. Those beams are funny things."

Pearson shrugged.

"Okay, maybe my idea won't work. But we're heading in the right direction anyway. If we can't ride the beam, we'll hoof along beneath it. It ought to lead us back."

"A couple thousand miles?" scoffed Huston.

Pearson stopped dead in his tracks.

"What're you trying to hand me? It can't be that far. It only took a second for them to shoot me out here."

"Arkway hinted it was plenty far when he gave me the works," said Huston. "And I don't think he was kid-

ding—not after the trouble he went to to put us on the spot. He wouldn't risk our getting back too soon."

"No," said Pearson slowly, "he wouldn't."

He began walking again, frowning in thought.

They began to ascend a slope, and the ferns thinned out. One of the blue suns popped over the horizon now, and the scene became brilliantly daylight. Huston saw the cliffs looming ahead of them. He scanned them interestedly.

"Some climb!" he breathed.

"Ought to make it by noon," said Pearson. "The beam goes over at night. That'll give us time to pile up some wood."

IN a few more minutes they arrived at the base of the cliffs, which were of the familiar red glass that Huston remembered from the valley where he had first seen this weird world, the valley of Enoch, the keeper of the door.

The two men stared up at them in dismay.

"You said it, some climb!" echoed Pearson.

"Well, let's get going," Huston determined. "It looks like there're plenty of crevices and ledges. But we'll have to be careful we don't cut ourselves on some of those edges. They look like razors!"

He led the way up the first fifty feet of the peculiar red-glass formation. As he climbed, he observed the stuff.

"Some sort of lava," he decided. "But odd!"

The climb preoccupied him after that, and when he began to pant, he halted to regain his breath.

"How you making out, Shorty?" he called down. There was no answer, and Huston peered down the cliff side. The gang leader was nowhere to be seen.

Had he fallen?

"Hey, Shorty!" Huston bellowed. "Where are you?"

A faint call came from aloft.

"Whatsamatter down there?"

Startled, Huston looked aloft. Pearson was a hundred feet above and to one side, and climbing steadily, swiftly, surely. He seemed almost to float up the cliff's face, using his hands and feet to aid his progress.

"Holy smoke!" yelled Huston. "How can you climb so fast?"

"Easy," Pearson's voice drifted down. "No trick to it when you know how."

Grimly Huston resumed his climbing, but when, after a half-hour, he reached the top, he was spent, his breath rasping through tortured lungs and throat.

Pearson was sitting on a fallen tree stump, looking at him peculiarly.

"Takes you a long time to catch on," he said. "But you will."

"You're some climber," panted Huston. "For a guy who's best exercise has been totin' a rod in a plush-upholstered sedan, you got plenty of muscle. Or maybe this ain't the same set of muscles, in this new world."

"Maybe," said Pearson vaguely. "But let's figure out where that beam crosses these cliffs. I been watching it last night, and it comes over right about here. There's a sort of star in the cliff face where it looks just like a giant hit it with a stone, or like a bullet hitting a windshield."

"Hell," said Huston looking at his hands, which were bleeding in several places. "I climbed right *through* that spot. It's exactly below us."

"Fine," Pearson stood up. "Now we can get to work."

THE gangster strode over to a peculiar bulbous-trunked fern and pushed against it. It creaked, and the

fronds waved. Pearson pushed again, harder this time, and a sharp cracking came from the base. Huston watched in amazement. The bole against which Pearson was shoving was at least four feet in diameter and—

With a splintering crash the huge fern-tree toppled over, broken at the base. Pearson grabbed a heavy limb and dragged the tree over to where Huston stood flatfooted.

"Come on," he said. "Think I'm going to do all the work?"

"Remind me," said Huston dazedly, "next time I want a building pushed over, to call you."

Pearson grinned.

"You'll catch on," he said reassuringly. "Didn't Arkway give you any hints—no I guess he wouldn't, the rat. But it'll come to you."

"What . . .?" began Huston, then snapped his mouth shut. There was something here he didn't understand, and whatever it was he would 'catch on to' might be pretty embarrassing if he proved he couldn't catch it.

Instead, he found a thick-boled fern, himself, being careful to select one that was less heavy than the one Pearson had so boisterously pushed over. He pushed. The fern shook. But nothing else happened. He pushed harder. In a moment he was straining against it with all his might. It began to creak.

"Damn!" he muttered. Then he drew back, hurled his shoulder against the soft-bark trunk with all the power in his body. There was a snap, and the fern began to topple.

"Pretty rotten wood, isn't it?" came Pearson's voice from where he was engaged in felling a veritable giant that towered sixty feet into the air.

"Yeah," panted Huston, sweating. "Yeah."

With great effort he dragged the fallen fern over to where Pearson indi-

cated they were to be piled. With a heave, the gangster helped him *toss* the fern on top of the two already there.

Two hours later a tremendous pile of stacked ferns offered a way to climb them to a height of nearly eighty feet. Huston was dazed at the magnitude of the task the little gangster had accomplished all by himself. For Huston, taking advantage of Pearson's energy, had joined forces helping him with the big ones, and although he had appeared to strain as mightily as the gangster had, he knew that he would have been unable to budge masses that were now perched atop a tremendous pile.

It was growing dark, with the weird green color of night.

"When's the beam due?" said Huston.

"Not for a couple of hours yet," answered Pearson. "No use our sitting here doing nothing. Let's scout around a bit."

THEY walked along the cliff-top for some distance, looking out over the strange magnificence of the setting suns and the deep colors of the valley below. Huston was fascinated by the stirring beauty of its savage nature.

"What a hole!" growled Pearson. "Be glad when I get out of here. And back to a decent world, where I can give that Arkway what he's got coming."

They walked on a little further, and suddenly Huston stopped.

"What's that up ahead?" he asked.

"Where?"

Pearson followed Huston's pointing finger with his eyes, and let out an exclamation.

"A house!"

They walked swiftly toward it. Reaching it, they found it was a small building, built of multi-colored plastics, all seemingly cast in one piece.

"Looks like the World's Fair sold some of their future houses," observed Pearson. "Wonder if anybody's home?"

He went to the door and rapped loudly. There was no sound from inside.

He laid a hand on the door and pushed. It swung inward.

"Unlocked!" he exclaimed. "Mighty careless people."

They went inside. As they stepped across the threshold, brilliant light sprang up, emanating from concealed sources.

Pearson crouched and wheeled around.

"Nobody here. . . ." he said.

"Lights come on automatically," said Huston. "They snapped on the minute we stepped inside the room."

"That must be it."

Pearson led the way through the place in a thorough search. He came out of an inner room with a cry of triumph.

"Clothes!" he said. "Real clothes. Now we can get out of these damned nightgowns."

He suited the action to the words and in a few moments was fully clothed in a suit that looked very much as though it had come from Hart Schaffner and Marx.

Huston rummaged around and found a suit also. It fit him a little tightly, but it would do.

"Come on," said Pearson. "Time we was getting back to the beam."

Outside, Huston stumbled across a large box in the heavy grass. He fell over it with an imprecation.

But as he scrambled to his feet there was a scream of dismay from the gang leader, and the whirring thunder of huge wings.

Dazed, Huston looked up to see a huge dragon fly, six feet long, hovering over them.

"It came out of that damn box!" yelled Pearson, backing away.

Huston remained standing, and in a moment the insect shot up into the sky and vanished. Pearson came back from his headlong flight, looking at Huston with new respect.

"Say, you *are* learning," he said. "I kinda forgot for a minute. Startled me. You sure shot him out of here in a hurry. Nice work!"

Huston gaped, then clamped his lips shut. Here it was again. He had done absolutely nothing. The dragon fly, in itself harmless, had simply hovered for an instant, then darted away. What did Pearson mean when he inferred that he, Huston, had "shot it out of here"?

"Didn't think I could do it myself," he said uncertainly. "But he sure went flying, didn't he?"

"Yeah. And now, the beam. We gotta hurry, or we'll miss it."

THEY reached the pile of ferns and Pearson began to scramble toward the top. Huston followed, and in a few moments they sat perched on the soft bole of a fern trunk, waiting. It was dark now, and the brilliant green of the sky above was beginning to fill with a myriad of blue-glinting stars.

"How come I didn't see any stars last night?" asked Huston in a puzzled voice.

"Too late. Nearly morning. They disappear when the suns are about to come up," Pearson informed him. "I know; I watched it happen last night."

For a few more minutes they sat.

"Ought to come pretty soon now," said Pearson. "Last night it . . ."

Almost as though his words had been the signal, a brilliant orange glow sprang up around them. They were squarely in the middle of it. The orange color penetrated to Huston's brain, seeming to immerse his whole body in

flame. There was no sound. An eerie sensation swept over Huston, and he clutched his fingers into the soft bark of the fern on which he sat.

"Here it is," said Pearson tensely. "Now we go places."

"I got a funny hunch we don't," said Huston.

"Why?"

"Because this beam works like lightning, and we're still here."

Pearson was silent, but he squirmed uneasily, looked about through the orange glare that still bathed then in its brain-filling warmth of color.

A few moments later the beam died.

"You were right," said Pearson. "We didn't go anywhere."

He got up and began climbing down the pile. Huston followed him in silence.

When they stood at the bottom, Huston looked at the little man.

"What do we do now?"

"Walk," said Pearson grimly. "Ten miles, or ten thousand, I'll get back to where the technicians are and settle with Arkway!"

"I'm going back to that house and sleep first," announced Huston. "I'm tired."

Pearson whirled on him.

"What did you say?" he demanded. Huston looked at him curiously.

"I said I wanted to sleep. I'm tired."

"D'ya know," said Pearson. "I don't even know your name. You never told me."

"Oh. That's right, I didn't. Well, back on Earth I was Arnett Huston. Here I don't know. Maybe I'm somebody else . . ."

"No you're not," said Pearson dangerously. "You're still Arnett Huston, here as well as on Earth. And now I know why you didn't catch on so easy. It's because you *can't*."

He leaped forward, and from his belt

he drew out a curiously wrought blade with a needle-sharp point.

"You dirty liar!" he snarled. "Thought you were clever with that nice little story of yours, hey? Well, Mr. Arnett Huston, here's where you go through the door the *legal* way! I figured this knife would come in handy when I picked it up back in that house!"

Startled, Huston backed away, but as he flung up his hands to ward off the blow of the knife, he knew he was too late. In a fraction of a second that blade would be in his heart . . .

But at the same instant a brilliant orange glow shot through his brain, and there was a swift soundless instant of motion. Then he was standing alone on a metal disk in a fantastic laboratory; and before him stood a grave-faced man clad in a brilliant red toka.

CHAPTER XIV

"We Are Sending You Back"

HUSTON staggered off the disk and whirled around. But Shorty Pearson was nowhere in sight.

"Where is he?" he asked, bewilderedly.

"Where is who?" asked the man in the red garment.

"Shorty Pearson."

"You mean the man who was with you when you tampered with the beam?"

"Yes."

"Still in the adaptational area. He has not completed his aptitude tests."

"What about me?" asked Huston curiously.

"That's what I intend to find out. Who are you? How did you get past the door? And what were you doing in that adaptational area?"

Huston walked over to a chair and

"Look out!" Pearson
yelled, backing away



sat down weakly. He still felt dizzy from his swift transition from imminent death to this pace.

"I'll tell you as soon as I get squared around," he said weakly. "Things happen too fast around here."

"Take your time. I would rather you gave me a coherent story."

"You a technician?"

"Yes. Divisional chief. Your case has been brought to my special attention."

"I see. Then you aren't in with that Arkway fellow?"

"Arkway? You mean section 34A?"

"You got me there. But he's a technician. New on the job, because he's only been dead a year."

"I know who you mean. But what's he got to do with it?"

"You just asked me how I got out in that crazy jungle—well Arkway's the technician that sent me there."

"Hm-m. Must have been some sort of mistake on his part."

Huston got to his feet grimly.

"No mistake on his part," he said.

"He shot me out there to get rid of me. Figured I'd be a long time getting back."

"That's true. You would. It's approximately eighty thousand of your Earth miles."

"*Eighty thousand!*" Huston gasped. "My God, what kind of a world is this?"

"Pretty big," admitted the red-robed technician. "More than six times the circumference of Earth, but with approximately the same gravity-mass. But about Arkway; what were you saying?"

"I'd BETTER start at the beginning. First, I came here to find two girls and a man, friends of mine. I want to take them back with me."

"I'm afraid that's impossible," inter-

rupted the red-robe. "There is no return for persons who have come through the vibrational area. Except, it seems, in your particular case—which I am anxious to learn about."

"These others I have mentioned are 'particular' cases too," said Huston firmly.

The technician's eyes opened wide.

"You mean there are more otherworlders here who have entered by extraordinary means?"

"Four more, to be exact, that I know about. There may be more."

"How did you get through the door?"

"With a whistle."

The technician produced a little silver whistle from his robe.

"This one?"

Huston started in surprise.

"Yes! Or one exactly like it."

"There are no others like this. It has been missing for nearly a year."

"Then that's the one. You got it from old Enoch, I suppose."

"Yes. Now, tell me how you got it."

"The man who was with me in the jungle first had it. He was using it to open the door when he was shot, and it became unnecessary. The door closed before I could get in, but I found the whistle. When I found out it was the key to the door, I used it."

"I see. And you came in to get these three—or four—people whom you mentioned before?"

"Three," corrected Huston. "The fourth came in with me. I haven't seen him since Enoch sent me to Arkway."

"Oh. And this man's name?"

"Gorrity. Sergeant Gorrity of the police of my city."

"That's enough. We'll locate him very shortly. I think I have a report on him on my desk now. But those other three—it is extremely strange that I have had no word of them, if they did come in illegally, as you say."

"Maybe Arkway has 'em hid somewhere," said Huston grimly. "That man's got plans. He'd like very much to have those three people out of the way so that when he goes back to Earth, he can have a free hand to continue his crooked business."

The technician's head snapped up.

"What's that you say?" he shot at Huston.

"John Arkway has a way of going back to the other-world," said Huston. "I'm sure of it now. That's why he had Ellen Whitney kidnaped and brought her through the door. And I have no doubt but what he forced Ellen Whitney to write that letter to Elaine Hardwicke so that he could get her out of the way too."

THE red-robed technician acted swiftly. He stepped to a television machine and made a contact. Another technician appeared in the visioscreen.

"Check on these names," snapped the red-robe, "Gorrity, Hardwicke, Whitney. And get technician 34A, John Arkway, for me immediately. Send him here."

The technician turned once more to Huston.

"We'll find out about this matter," he said. "You may be sure of that. And now, if you'll step this way, I'll take you to the vibration adjusting room. You will need to undergo a slight treatment before we send you back to the other-world. You could not pass through the door and remain, because you would be in considerable agony. Even though you don't belong here, you don't belong there either."

"I'm not ready to go back yet, said Huston. "I'm taking those girls and Peter Hardwicke and Sergeant Gorrity back with me."

"I'm sorry," said the technician firmly. "We're sending you back now. The

others will be sent as soon as they are located. There is nothing you can do."

"I'll wait," said Huston grimly. "We might as well all go back together. My request is not an unreasonable one."

"You will go now," said the red-robe.

And Huston, to his intense surprise, found himself walking without volition of his own, meekly behind the technician.

"Let me go!" he raged. "You can't do this to me . . ."

"Everyone can exercise mental control in this world," said the red-robe. "If you were here legally, you could fight me, although I would win out, because I have greater power. But being an other-worlder still, you are as easy to handle as an inanimate object. So objecting will do you no good. You might as well come quietly."

Huston walked along, dumbfounded.

"So *that's* how Pearson could climb that cliff, and toss those ferns around like feathers!" he breathed.

Suddenly an orange flash lit the laboratory for a moment, and a technician in a blue robe appeared. He was greatly agitated.

"Chief!" he cried. "Technician 34A has opened the door and gone into the other-world with two illegal entrants . . ."

"*What!*" The red-robed technician whirled around, sheer amazement on his face. "Impossible! It can't be done! He couldn't possibly have learned the secret!"

Huston felt his mind released from the control that had been forcing him to walk along. He too turned toward the blue-robed man.

"Who were the two others?" he asked hoarsely. "Who!"

"The ones named Elaine Hardwicke and Ellen Whitney," the fellow answered. "He had them hidden in his own quarters."

"Oh my God!" Huston groaned. "He's done it!"

The red-robed technician stared at him.

"You knew what you were talking about," he said. "This changes matters a bit. For the present, I will comply with your request. I may need you for information. You will stay here until we straighten this matter out."

"Thanks," said Huston. "But what are we waiting for. That man had his plans laid, and every second we delay will give him that much more opportunity to carry them into effect. No telling what he has up his sleeve. . . ."

"You are right," decided the technician swiftly. "Follow me."

CHAPTER XV

Shorty Pearson Makes a Break

ARNETT HUSTON followed as the two technicians led the way to a great room which was an amazing amphitheatre of scientific marvels. On all sides were gleaming television receivers and transmitters, transportation disks, and machines whose purpose Huston could not divine.

The two technicians went into action. Screens lit up, and reports came in thick and fast. And finally Huston let out an exclamation as the familiar figure of Sergeant Gorrity appeared on one screen. He was standing beside a white-robed technician.

"Send him here," directed the red-robed man. And the image faded.

In a few seconds an orange flash lit the laboratory and Gorrity stood blinking around the huge room.

"Gorrity!" yelled Huston. "You old son of a gun!"

Gorrity stepped forward and gripped Huston's hand warmly.

"Thought I'd never convince that

monkey I shouldn't be sent some damn place to prove I ought to be a cop," he said. "You came to the rescue just in time."

"I didn't come to any rescue," said Huston. "Red-robe did that. I'm just as much on the pan as you are. But the important thing is that everything's gone wrong. John Arkway's got the two girls and gone back to Earth. He's got a new set-up planned, and he'll raise particular hell back on earth. With all this science, which he certainly has under his hat after a year, he can make Hitler look like a monkey."

"Wait a minute," protested Gorrity. "Bring me up to date. Who is John Arkway, and what's all this about?"

"Oh, I forgot you don't know the whole story," said Huston. "Well, you remember that missing girl, Ellen Whitney, that I looked up in your files, and what I told you about the people we were looking for when we came in the door?"

"I don't know much," said Gorrity grimly. "You sure kept me in the dark."

Swiftly Huston outlined the situation, beginning with the Poker Flats swindle, and ending with his experience with Shorty Pearson in the jungle. When he had finished, Gorrity loosed a long whistle.

"That *is* something!" he exclaimed. "Why, do you know, if we can get back to Earth, we can untangle enough mysteries to make the headlines for a year!"

"To hell with headlines," snapped Huston. "We've got bigger stuff to stop now. John Arkway will kill Elaine Hardwicke after he's through with her. She's too dangerous to him out there. Can't imagine what he took her along for . . ." he paused and paled, ". . . yes I can, too! He knew she'd be sent back because she was here illegally, so he plans to kill her, send her through the

right way, and make sure she never bothers him!"

"What about Miss Whitney?" asked Gorrity.

"I don't know," said Huston, frowning. "I have a hunch she's in with Arkway. She was married to this Anderson fellow, but she was pretty thick with Arkway, or he wouldn't have left her his whole fortune—especially since he had no inkling he was going to die. Then Pearson had Anderson bumped off; which is where I run up against a blank wall. I'm sure Arkway didn't have him do it, because he'd been dead a year—but then again, he *did* have contact with Arkway in some manner. I wonder just what? So, if Pearson did the bumping in person, why? One of the mob told me that in that way he could get hold of Arkway's money, which Ellen Whitney had. With her husband out of the way, Pearson had some hold on Ellen to make her give him the money. But that again implies a double-cross on Arkway, so . . ."

"Quit it," implored Gorrity. "You're getting me dizzy."

AN ORANGE flash punctuated his sentence, and Huston turned to see who the new arrival was.

"Petey!" he exclaimed.

Petey Jimpson, or Peter Hardwicke, stood blinking at them. He was completely nude, and there was caked blood on his breast. He reeled, and would have fallen, had not the red-robed technician sprung forward and assisted him to a couch.

"Restoratives!" he snapped to his assistant.

Huston and Gorrity watched in awe as some of the electrical-blue liquid was poured down his throat; and a battery of machine bathed him in rays. Gradually the wound in the old man's breast healed, until only a white scar was left.

The caked blood and dirt vanished as though by magic, and in a moment Petey sat erect, was given a gown to don, and helped to his feet.

"Arnett Huston!" exclaimed Hardwicke.

"What happened to you?" asked Huston.

"I hardly know. I came through the door, and my clothes burned off. I was in agony for some time, and when I got through the area of flames, Pearson, the gangster, was gone. I was alone in a strange red cavern. When I tried to leave, I was attacked by a terrible monster—like one of those you saw through the door when Elaine went in. The awful thing carried me away to its lair and kept me captive. I tried to escape, but it stabbed me with its claw. I think I was captive for two days, because it got dark twice."

"It was two days," said Huston. "Gorrity, of the police, here, and I came in the night after you. We've been here a day and a night. But how did you get away from the creature that had you cooped up?"

"I didn't. Just a few moments ago, it seems, there was a strange orange flash of light, and I found myself standing in this magnificent place." Harwicke stared around in admiration.

"That is right," interposed the technician in the red robe. "We found you, after we'd searched everywhere. We were almost too late. If you had died in the vibrational area, your atoms might have been dispersed as pure energy and you'd never have been able to return to either world."

"I don't know what you're talking about," said Hardwicke, "but I am grateful to you for finding me."

"This completes our work here," said the red-robe. "Now we must arrange to send you all back to your own world . . ." He hesitated and

looked at Huston queerly.

"What about Arkway?" asked Huston, divining his thoughts.

"That is another matter," said the technician soberly. "First we'll have to locate him in your world, and try to pick him up with a transport ray. If we fail that . . ."

"We'll get him," promised Huston. "We'll round him up and send him back."

The technician looked at him.

"If the ray fails, your efforts will be rather inconsequential. I am afraid there will be no way for you to open the door once you are outside."

"Give me the whistle!"

"Impossible. That was a mistaken experiment we once made. It cannot be repeated. I shall keep the whistle."

He turned to the blue-robe.

"We are ready," he said. "We'll go now to the tower of Enoch. Prepare the drink for these other-worlders, and bring it to me at the tower as soon as you can. I will search meanwhile for Arkway."

The blue-robe nodded, stepped on a disk and was gone in an orange flash.

"Come," said the chief technician.

TOGETHER the four of them stepped onto a disk, and in the familiar brain-filling orange burst, they went into the instantaneous sensation of swift movement and found themselves standing inside the great ball atop the control tower of Enoch, guardian of the valley of the door.

Old Enoch stood there, blinking as he saw the red-robed technician. Then he saw Huston and Gorrity.

"Oh, it's you two, again," he said. "On your way back, I suppose."

"Enoch," said the red-robed technician, "a few hours ago two persons went through your valley. Did they come through your tower?"

"Which way?" asked Enoch.

"Going out."

Enoch nodded.

"Two people went through, a man and a woman, but not through the tower. I caught a glimpse of them going through the valley on foot. They dived off the cliffs on some sort of a sling fashioned of cloth . . ."

"A parachute!" exclaimed Huston. "That Arkway is clever!"

"What happened then?" asked the red-robe.

"I tried to pick them up with my beam, but it failed to operate. They had an insulator. They went into the cavern of the vibration area. I reported the matter instantly."

"You mean they haven't gotten out of the door yet!"

Enoch shook his head.

"They have gotten out. I watched then in the televisior, and they made their way safely through the vibrations, and reached the door just as it was opening. They both went out."

The red-robed technician turned to the controls of the tower. He made delicate adjustments that made old Enoch's eyes open wide. Then a pale, whitish beam sprang out, diffused, vanished. But on the television screen a familiar scene appeared. It was the street outside the bronze doors in the wall of the Merchant's City Bank.

"Is *that* the other-world?" gasped Enoch. "I never knew that it could be seen by our television means."

"Quiet," ordered the red-robe. "I am trying to follow the aura of John Arkway, through the other-world."

The scene on the television screen blurred. It became a confused tangle of many scenes. Huston recognized many of them. At last the scene cleared, and the interior of an ornate home appeared. In the room were three people; John Arkway, Ellen Whitney, and

Elaine Hardwicke.

"My home!" exclaimed Peter Hardwicke. "They've gone to my home!"

"In Chicago?" asked Huston.

"Yes."

"We will try to pick him up," said the red-robe.

He made more adjustments on the tower controls, while Huston and his companions watched anxiously. In the background old Enoch was muttering as still more secrets of his beloved tower were revealed to him—secrets that he had not himself suspected.

In a moment an orange beam, of a deeper hue than Huston had ever seen before, lanced out. It swept toward the red cavern, and abruptly the scene on the television screen turned orange. The red-robe pressed a switch.

Nothing happened. But on the screen, John Arkway turned a startled face, apparently toward them. A moment he looked frightened, then he smiled evilly. His lips moved and his arm made a derisive motion. For a few minutes the chief technician made further adjustments in the ray, then he snapped it off.

"He has a perfect insulator. We cannot snatch him back by transport ray."

"Then what can we do?" asked Huston.

THE red-robed technician looked grim.

"There is one thing that Arkway cannot know. And I myself have never used it before. There is a law against it, and if I use it now, I shall be called upon to explain. But I believe this emergency is so serious that I shall risk it."

A single instant the technician pondered, then he stepped to the controls once more. This time old Enoch turned surlily away and looked out over the valley.

"Can't they trust me?" Huston heard him mumble. "Seems to me—I have a right to know these things about my tower . . ."

An orange flash came from the globe above them and the blue-robed technician appeared. He carried several flasks of sparkling red liquid.

"The drink," he announced to the chief technician.

The red-robe waved him away, intent on his adjustments. Finally he straightened.

"It is ready," he said significantly. "When I press this lever, John Arkway will be dispersed into the infinite as pure energy. It is complete annihilation . . ."

Somehow Huston felt a shudder race up and down his spine. Beside him Gorrity spat over the rail into the valley below. His Irish face was white.

"But the spalpeen deserves it," he muttered under his breath.

The technician placed a hand on the lever—and as he did so there came another orange flash from the globe above. Down through the opening came the figure of Shorty Pearson. In his hand was a strange weapon.

"Don't make a move, Red-shirt! And no mental stuff either," he warned, "or you'll get it right in the guts. I seen the whole play in the television, and I found out how to work the ray just in time. Step back, big boy, or I'll scatter *your* atoms over the whole damn sky!"

CHAPTER XVI

To Murder a Dead Man!

THE red-robed technician dropped his hand from the switch and stepped back.

"Where did you get that disintegrating pistol?" he asked.

Pearson grinned.

"Same place Huston there got his clothes. We didn't give that place a thorough going over, Huston . . ." Pearson was addressing Huston now, "we missed a lot of things. For instance, a television set, this gun, and a transport ray. So when I got the whole thing straight, watching you guys, I decided to horn in."

"You can't do anything," said Huston.

"Oh yes, I can. I can contact Arkway, and he'll get me outa here. In fact, Red-shirt here can put me on the television so I can talk to Arkway right now. I got a hunch he knows a way. He knows so many things . . ."

Shorty Pearson grinned. Obviously he was enjoying his control of the situation.

"But first, pal, I wanta solve a few of those problems you been aching about. You were right about Arkway contacting me. I got letters from him. It's possible to go out that door, and come back, in spite of the vibrations. It hurts like hell, but you can stand it long enough to get to the mail box on the corner. The only thing I objected to was payin' postage due, of course.

"And I had Anderson bumped off because Arkway asked me to. Y'see, when Arkway came back, he couldn't really get going unless he had his money back, so I was supposed to get it back. And it was simple. I just kill Anderson, and bingo, the money is mine."

"I don't get it," said Huston. "How come bingo?"

"Well, you'll get it when I tell you Ellen Whitney is my sister," said Pearson.

Huston gaped.

"Your sister!"

"Sure. That's how come Arkway and I been operating together. And when Arkway found the whistle, and

what it was for, we had big plans. We knew there was a lot of hot science in here somewhere. There was a manuscript with the whistle, handed down for hundreds of years . . . but that don't interest you none. Right now I got other things to do."

Pearson advanced ominously.

"Come on, Red-shirt, put John Arkway on the wire for me. No, you do it, Blue-shirt. I don't trust this guy. And if you make a phoney move, I'll drill your boss, see."

The blue-robed technician looked at his superior, who nodded briefly. Then he put down the containers of red liquid, and advanced to the controls.

"Auditory extension," said the chief technician.

THE blue-robed technician threw in several switches, and on the screen, those on the tower platform could hear Arkway's voice, talking to the two girls.

"Yes, Elaine, every word of it's true. And you might as well go in with us. If you don't, you'll regret it. Ellen and I have been in love for years. She knew your father was innocent—and the files to prove it have been in her possession ever since. But that husband of hers was smarter than I anticipated, and he grabbed her money—my money—so that she couldn't touch it without his consent. So I had him killed, through Mr. Pearson, a friend of mine . . ."

Huston looked at Pearson, who had backed up against the base of the great globe. The gangster's gaze had dropped, and a surprised look of pleasure was in his eyes.

"Whaddya know!" he chortled. "A tommy-gun, lyin' here, and loaded to the top! It'll be a damn sight better'n this Buck Rogers heat gun. I doubt if I know how to pull the trigger anyway . . ."

He reached down swiftly, picked up the tommy-gun. Huston recognized it in a flash as Gorrity's police weapon. Behind him he heard Enoch muttering.

"Forgot about that thing," he said. "Should have removed it . . ."

But now Gorrity lunched himself into action. There was a grin on his face.

"Shoot, Shorty!" he yelled. "Because I'm coming at you!"

Startled, but ready, Pearson whipped the gun up and trained it on Gorrity's plunging figure. With a gasp of horror, Huston saw that the big policeman would never make it. He was too far from the little gangster.

But even as he stared in dismay, it happened.

Pearson pressed the trigger and the gun erupted in his hands. There was a terrific blast, and a portion of the gun smashed into the great globe, shattering it. Tons of debris rained down on Shorty Pearson. Behind the technicians, a vast sheet of flame ripped from the controls and the generators connected to them, and flashed groundward, fusing everything in its path.

Huston felt himself hurled from his feet, to land with a crash against the iron rail.

Then all was quiet.

For a moment he lay there, then he clambered to his feet. Gorrity was sitting on the shattered platform, a ludicrous expression of amazement on his homely features. The two technicians were beating flames from their garments. Peter Hardwicke clung to the rail, white, but unharmed. Of Pearson there was no sign beneath the debris of the great ball.

"My God," said Gorrity. "I knew the gun wouldn't fire. All the shells in it were duds. But somehow they went off now, all at once!"

Enoch's voice came from beneath a heap of folded metal, and he crawled

out, dirty and bedraggled, but otherwise intact.

"Those other-world gadgets never work right here. Sometimes they take weeks to work. Time element must be different, or something. Those shells weren't duds, but they were delayed. When he picked the weapon up, he disturbed the delicate balance enough to explode them."

"Lucky you *didn't* pick it up before," said Huston significantly.

The old man cackled.

"Wouldn't have been any trick at all. I could have whisked it way up in the air with a transport ray before it could explode."

"THIS is terrible," came the voice of the red-robed technician. "Our apparatus has been ruined. It would take weeks to replace it, or rebuild it. And meanwhile Arkway can make himself impregnable."

Huston stared at him.

"You mean Arkway can, and will, devise a protection against whatever you were going to throw at him before Pearson came?"

"Yes. Undoubtedly he has formula 568C, for complete isolation. It will take him only a few days to construct the apparatus, and he will be invincible."

"Then," said Huston, "it's up to me. Give me that drink and let's get through that door."

"What do you intend to do? You have no way of sending Arkway back through that door."

Huston grinned.

"Yes I have. The same way Shorty Pearson came through it . . ."

Peter Hardwicke gasped.

"You mean kill him? But how can you? He's already dead—"

The red-robed technician loosed an exclamation.

"Yes!" he confirmed. "He can be eliminated. Not killed, but disintegrated. We can prepare a disintegrating gun so that it will be usable for a short time. If you get to Arkway before its charge is lost in the other-world vibrations, he can be destroyed. But he will not come through the door. He will be loosed as energy in your own universe."

"That won't hurt our universe any," said Huston. "It could use a little more energy."

"Yes," decided the red-robed one. "That is our only hope now. You must destroy him. We will send you all back immediately. But when you have gone through, we shall destroy the door forever. It was a mistake to construct it in the first place. The plane of vibration between our two worlds will be enough for traffic."

"You mean," said Huston slowly, "that for your own protection, for the safety of your world, you must make it impossible for Arkway to ever bridge the gap, and become master of this world too?"

"Yes and whatever happens because of Arkway in your own world will be upon your heads, whatever it is," said the technician slowly. "Unless you can manage to get to him in time . . ."

Huston reached for one of the vials of red liquid.

"Let's get going," he said.

He opened the container and downed the liquid. The same sensation of electric shock, the vertigo, that he had experienced in Arkway's laboratory passed over him. Then he recovered, reeling dizzily.

The others drank too, then clambered down the partially wrecked stairway. Enoch accompanied them, grumbling.

"I've never had to use this before," he complained. "My beautiful gadgets, all smashed!"

At the bottom they struck out across the valley to the cavern entrance. Inside, Huston marveled again at the magnificent crimson light that streamed all around them. Then he looked at the curtain of flaming vibration that loomed before them.

THE red-robed technician handed him a disintegrating gun which glowed in his hand almost as though it were radio-active.

"The glow will protect it for some time, but it will gradually disperse," he said.

Huston stared in surprise.

"How did you get this?"

Mental control. A very simple matter."

Huston swallowed, then shrugged.

"Come on, Sarge, and Petey," he said.

"Let's be on our way."

Peter Hardwicke lingered.

"I am curious to know," he said to the red-robed technician, "whether Mr. Pearson, crushed beneath that pile of debris, can be said to have 'died' again?"

The red-robed chief shook his head.

"I don't know," he said simply. "Our world has its mystery, its hell, just as has yours. We have legends, of course, but there is no foundation in fact. Perhaps he, once more, has found a door to another world. We don't know. No one has ever come back from it, in our world."

Hardwicke nodded strangely, then followed Huston and Gorrity.

The excruciating agony of the vibration curtain tore at them, and as they walked on, they saw phantom forms. But always they shuffled away, or wheeled aloft on rustling wings. Huston was conscious suddenly that Enoch was beside him, and somehow, because of his presence, attack was being warded off.

At length they reached the stone stairway, and the torture lessened. They climbed up, gasping. When they reached the inside of the doorway, the vibrations had become only a slight tingling sensation on their skin. But Huston stared down at himself in horror.

"Our clothes!" he gasped. "We can't go out this way!"

"We don't have any choice," said Gorrity. And he added a remark:

"Enoch, I didn't suspect you were bowlegged! Ever ride a horse?"

Enoch snorted.

"I've ridden dragons," he said. "When you get into the other-world, you can start that rumor about me too! A bow-legged devil with horns and a tail who rides dragons in a brimstone rodeo!"

"Enoch," chuckled Gorrity, "you got a sense of humor!"

Enoch did something to the door and it creaked inward.

"Goodbye," said the old man. "It was nice having you, even though you wrecked my control tower. But they'll build me another, and this time I'll insist on knowing how *everything* works, and when I do know, by golly, I'll haunt you other-worlders. I'll give you forked tails!"

They stepped outside the door and it slammed shut behind them. It was night and the street was deserted. That is, almost deserted.

"Hey, you guys!" came a surprised roar behind them. "What's the idea? Think this is a nudist colony?"

They whirled to face a blue-coated officer.

"McClintock!" exclaimed Huston.

"Sarge!" gasped McClintock. "And Huston! My God, Sarge, what are you doing gallivanting around the streets in that condition? I never thought I'd have to arrest my own

chief for indecent exposure and moral inturpitude!"

"McClintock," said Gorrity dangerously. "The word is 'turpitude' but if you don't call a wagon and get us to the station where we can get some clothes, I'll put you on patrol outside this door for the rest of your life."

McClintock stared at the sergeant, then at the door, and his jaw dropped.

"Sarge," he moaned. "Don't tell me you guys came *out* of that door!"

"Yes!" yelled Gorrity. "Weren't you the guy kept insisting this door opened. Now you see us come out of it, and you don't want *me* to tell *you* it opens. Get that patrol car, and get it pronto. Want me to catch pneumonia?"

McClintock turned and galloped down to the call-box at the corner.

CHAPTER XVII

"There's More Than Death, Arkway!"

SERGEANT GORRITY shut the door of his office carefully and faced Huston, Peter Hardwicke, and officer McClintock.

"It ain't murder to kill a guy who's already dead," he explained. "But that would be hard to explain to the chief. So I've fixed it this way. I told the chief we have a clue as to the whereabouts of Ellen Whitney and for 50% of the reward, he's fixing it so we can fly to Chicago to pick her up."

"Why the lousy chiseler!" said Huston.

"Quiet," warned Gorrity. "Ain't none of us has enough money to charter a plane, and we gotta get to Chi right away, don't we?"

"He's still a chiseler," grumbled Huston.

"Well, whatever he is, the tickets are waiting for us at the airport, so let's get going."

Gorrity strapped a heavy service revolver on each hip, and packed a tommy-gun into a suitcase.

"McClintock," he ordered, "you get an arsenal too. Never can tell what we'll run up against."

McClintock complied, and in a few moments they were ready.

"What's all this?" came an amazed voice.

The chief stood in the doorway.

"What's all the hardware for?" he asked. "Going to need all that fire power to pick up a missing girl?"

"She's in the power of a gang," said Gorrity. "We may have to fight our way to her. And I think maybe we'll solve a half-dozen more kidnappings at the same time. Maybe a lot more reward. . . ."

"Oh, well, be sure you don't get caught off guard. Surround the place and shoot to kill, if it begins to look tough. Don't call in the Chicago police. Just call in a patrolman when you're ready, so you can have an alibi for lack of cooperation, if you really uncover something sensational."

The chief turned on his heel and went out.

"Smart boy, the chief," murmured Huston. "He ain't missing any bets. No three-way splits for him."

"Let's go," said Gorrity, "before I have to tell some lies I can't back up."

An hour later Huston watched the ground drop away beneath him as the giant plane winged its way from the airport and into the sky, wheeling toward Chicago.

And from his pocket he drew a copy of the morning paper and looked once more at the picture on the front page.

BANK ROBBERY FOILED was the caption.

The picture showed a now familiar bank wall, a gaping portion of it collapsed into the street. And amidst the

debris, the curiously fused and melted heap of bronze that had once been an ornately and grimly carved pair of very valuable doors.

"Trust the chief to claim foiling a robbery, after he found out nothing was missing from the bank," said Huston. "But if he only knew the truth . . ."

"Yeah," said Gorrity. "It's all up to us now. Either we get Arkway, or he gets . . ."

"The world!" finished Huston. "And what a world he'll make it!"

"Yeah," reiterated Gorrity, "we gotta get him!"

LANDING at the airport, they took a cab. Hardwicke gave the address of his own home to the cabby and settled back, a peculiar expression on his face.

"I hope no one recognizes me," he said. "They'll arrest me and lock me up for the Poker Flats swindle, and I want to be in on the finish of this thing. After that . . ."

"After that," said Huston, "we'll get the files that are in Ellen Whitney's possession. They'll clear you. You heard Arkway say that over the televisor."

Hardwicke nodded.

"I'm more interested now in getting Elaine out of that fiend's clutches. I know she won't agree to go in with him, and she'll tell him so. Then he'll kill her."

Huston leaned forward and spoke to the cab driver.

"Step on it," he said. "We're in a hurry."

They sat in grim silence until they reached the ornate edifice that was the home of Peter Hardwicke. Huston directed the driver to stop around the corner. He paid the cab off, and it sped away. It was dark now, and the street lights glinted on Gorrity's arma-

ment as he unsheathed the tommy gun.

"In the side door," said Hardwicke. "I still have a key hanging under the rafter, I think. Used to sneak in on Elaine sometimes when I stayed out too late."

He led the way up a darkened walk between shrubbery. At the door he paused and fumbled around.

"The house is all dark," whispered McClintock. "Don't look like there's anybody here."

Huston had been about to voice the same fear, but had desisted because of Peter Hardwicke. But Hardwicke heard now, and the tinkle of the key sounded ominously loud as he dropped it to the concrete steps.

Huston stooped, fumbled for it, found it. Then he stepped to the door and inserted it in the lock. The door opened. They went into the dark, and Hardwicke snapped on the hall light.

A stairway was revealed, going upward. Gorrity started up, gun at the ready. The three followed.

TEN minutes later they knew the truth. The house was empty. Arkway had fled, and the two girls with him.

Peter Hardwicke looked stricken.

"Oh God," he moaned. "There's no telling what that devil will do to my poor daughter."

"Wonder where they could have gone," said Huston. "Obviously he got suspicious, knew someone might come, and went to a safer place . . ."

Hardwicke lifted his head.

"There's one place!" he exclaimed. "Where's that?"

"The Island. Up in the north end of Lake Michigan. He'd think of going there. Probably force Elaine to go with him, on my cruiser."

"We can check on that," said Gorrity. "If your boat's gone, it's a cinch."

"Come on," said Huston. "We've got to hurry. If that's where he's gone, we won't be able to reach him before tomorrow night."

"You've got to get there sooner," said Hardwicke, "if that's where he's gone. By plane; seaplane."

"That'll cost more money than we got," objected Gorrity.

Hardwicke stepped from the room, and returned in a few moments with a wad of bills.

"Here," he said. "I had this hidden. And it's honest money, too."

Once more they commandeered a taxi and arriving at the yacht club, Hardwicke hurried down to the wharf.

"It's gone!" he exclaimed. "They've gone to the Island all right!"

A caretaker came over.

"Looking for the Hardwicke cruiser?" he asked.

"Yes," said Huston. "Did two girls and a man go out in it recently?"

"This morning. Miss Hardwicke, and a girl and a man I don't know. Said they were going for a cruise to Port Washington."

"It's the seaplane for us!" exclaimed Huston. "Let's go!"

Two hours later they were roaring through the night sky over the gleaming waters of Lake Michigan. Below them to the left shone the lights first of Milwaukee, of Sheboygan, and then of Green Bay. Then darkness as they swung out over the northern reaches of the lake.

It was just before dawn that Peter Hardwicke let out an exclamation and pointed out a dark bulk on the lightning horizon.

"The Island!"

HUSTON pointed it out to the pilot.

"That's where we're going," he said. "Land on the north side, as far out as possible, and taxi in to shore. We

want to land unobserved, if possible."

The pilot nodded, and complied. He swung the craft around to the north and brought it down on a long, silent glide. He landed in the water, a mile from the island, and taxied in slowly. The ship tossed in the waves as they neared shore, and the pilot headed toward a white strip of beach. The plane floated in, stopped in the shallow water, white breakers swishing past the pontoons up to the sand.

"Stay here and wait," commanded Huston. "If we don't come back by noon, fly back to Chicago, and send this telegram—" he handed the man a slip of paper "—without fail. Because if we don't come back, it's going to be damned serious!"

The pilot nodded.

"I get you."

The four men stepped then into the surf and slogged toward shore. Once there, Hardwicke led the way, climbing a bluff amid pines, and found a path at the top. He led the way around the island to a rambling summer house that was white against the brightening morning sky.

"There it is," he said in trembling tones. "And there, down by the wharf, is my cabin cruiser!"

They advanced quietly.

"Too early to be up yet," whispered Huston. "Maybe we can surprise him."

"I hope so," said Gorrity. "He might have some ugly stuff to shoot at us. No telling what he's brought out of that other-world with him."

Once more they approached the rear door, concealed by shrubbery and small pines. Huston tiptoed up on the porch as they reached it, and tried the door. It opened readily. He stepped inside. Gorrity and McClintock followed, and Hardwicke brought up the rear.

It was dim inside, the shades being drawn.

Huston made his way through what was obviously a kitchen, and finally into a large living room. It was empty, and he clutched his strange other-world weapon more firmly as he peered toward a stairway leading upward.

"They must be upstairs, still in bed," he said in a low whisper. "I'm going up. McClintock, you stay down here, on guard. Hardwicke, you better stay here too."

"Not me," said Hardwicke. "I want to find my daughter."

The three of them ascended the stairs, which creaked slightly from their weight. At the top was a door, which Huston tried gently. It opened beneath the pressure of his fingers on the knob.

"Come in, gentlemen," said a voice. "I've been expecting you."

The door swung wide and Huston saw John Arkway seated in an easy chair, an automatic pistol held easily in his hand. He did not point it at them.

"Come in," he repeated. "It's nice to see you. Mr. Huston, you're rather a surprise to me. I thought you were gamboling around in that nice little jungle in the adaptational area. And you, Mr. Hardwicke. I hardly expected to see you again, especially since I thought you were a ghost the last time you visited me."

He looked at Huston.

"That disintegrator you hold in your hand—didn't they tell you it wouldn't work in this world? Something to do with vibrations, I believe. In fact, you couldn't fry an egg with that thing."

HARDWICKE stepped forward.

"What have you done with my daughter?" he demanded.

"Nothing at all, yet," said Arkway. "After all, she is too beautiful to destroy without sufficient reason, is she

not? And perhaps when she sees you, she will decide not to afford me with a reason, eh?"

He lifted his voice.

"Ellen! Will you girls come in now?"

The door behind Arkway opened and Ellen Whitney appeared. She was holding Elaine Hardwicke tightly by the arm, but she released her grip at a nod from Arkway.

"Daddy!" exclaimed Elaine, darting forward and throwing herself into his arms. "Oh, Daddy! I thought you were dead."

"Elaine, my baby," said Hardwicke hoarsely, gently. "Don't cry. I'm all right, and everything else's going to be all right too."

"Yes," said Arkway smoothly. "I am sure it is. And now, if the officer behind you, Huston, will kindly put his weapons on the table here, I will appreciate it very much. And if the gentleman downstairs will come up and do the same, it will make things much easier."

He did not lift his voice, but Huston's skin crawled as he heard McClintock's clumping footsteps coming up the stairs, and saw Gorrity stumble unwillingly toward the table, put down his tommy-gun, and unbuckle his gun belts. McClintock came in, and also unburdened himself of his weapons.

"That's better," said Arkway. "And you, Mr. Huston, will train your weapon directly on me, but you will not fire it. You cannot press the trigger. I think you will get a great thrill out of having me under your sights. It will remind you of how nice it would be to shoot me, even if the gun would fire; and you don't know that, do you? I can see in your mind that you believe it will fire. Be assured that you are wrong."

"Damn you," said Huston. "Maybe I can't fire this thing, but there's more

than death, Arkway!"

"Assuredly." In fact, you and I have seen much of it, haven't we? How would you like to go back to that place?"

"It's a place you won't go," said Huston.

"No?"

"No. If you've got any plans about that, you can throw them overboard. And if you want to know why, there's a paper in my pocket that'll explain."

Arkway frowned. He looked at the paper, protruding from Huston's pocket, and Huston's hair rose on the back of his neck as he felt it tugging to free itself from the flap, then saw it float through the air toward Arkway. It opened to the front page, and Arkway started.

"The door!" he exclaimed savagely. "They've destroyed it!"

His eyes blazed savagely at the paper, and the vessels in his forehead stood out in anger.

"I'll get them anyway!" he began.

"No you won't," Huston's voice rang triumphantly. "Theres more than death, Arkway, and you're going to find it out now!"

HE pulled the trigger, which his straining finger had been steadily depressing; depressing with every ounce of force of Huston's will; functioning slightly as the mental control of John Arkway relaxed in his anger at the news of the destruction of the door.

A brilliant lance of white light flamed out, struck Arkway full in the breast. For an instant the man's whole body glowed, as though it were inwardly illuminated, then a swirl of intensely brilliant motes whirled around him, and an electrical aura made the hair of everyone in the room twitch with its forces. Then, like a light being extinguished, the brilliance vanished, and

when Huston's eyes accustomed themselves to the gloom again, the chair in which John Arkway had been sitting was empty. Only a few whiffs of smoke rose from its scorched upholstery."

A shrill scream came from Ellen Whitney's throat, and she looked at Huston with horror in her eyes.

"You've killed him!" she screamed. "You've *killed* him!"

She rushed forward, and threw herself at Huston. Her clenched fists beat at his breast, and she sobbed wildly.

Huston backed away, tried to ward off her frenzied attack without hurting her.

All at once she stopped. There was a strange look on her face.

"You've killed him," she repeated, "but I can find him again. I know how . . ."

She wheeled and stepped swiftly toward the table where the guns that Gorrity and McClintock had been forced to discard were lying. She snatched up a revolver and whirled around, eyes blazing.

"I'm not a killer!" she choked. "Not a cold-blooded murderer. I can't shoot you, although I'd like to. But I can—" she hesitated a brief second "*—shoot myself!*"

Huston leaped forward in dismay, but she turned the weapon at her breast and pulled the trigger.

The heavy bark of the police gun thundered through the room, and Ellen Whitney sagged to the floor. The gun crashed beside her, and Elaine Hardwicke's scream of horror punctuated the gastly symphony of death.

Blood welled from the white front of Ellen's dress.

Huston knelt beside her. She wasn't dead yet, he could see.

Her eyes looked up at him, glazing rapidly.

"You poor girl," said Huston huskily. "Why did you do it—so uselessly!"

She didn't seem to hear him, but over his shoulder she saw Elaine's tearful face.

"Elaine," she whispered. "I'm sorry—about—what I'd—did to you," her voice was growing rapidly weaker. "My—files—home. . . Evidence . . ."

Her head fell back. She was **dead**.

HUSTON rose, took off his coat and covered her face. Then he turned to Elaine, took her by the shoulders.

"She didn't know what I meant," he said tragically. "Didn't know what I meant when I said 'there's more than death for you, Arkway'."

Elaine buried her head on his shoulder and sobbed softly.

Huston looked at Hardwicke and Gorrity and shook his head.

"We know what you mean," said Gorrity shakenly. "But maybe it's better that way. From what I figure, she wasn't such a bad dame, after all. And maybe in that other-world, she can find a guy who deserves her a bit more than Arkway would have. It's a cinch he'll never lead anyone else astray."

Huston lifted Elaine's head from his shoulder, then he turned to her father.

"Petey," he said, "I wish you'd introduce me to your daughter. I was never formally introduced, you know. In fact, I got her name from Ellen Whitney's missing record."

Peter Hardwicke took his daughter's hand.

"Laney, honey," he said. "This is Mr. Arnett Huston, who came through the door with Mr. Gorrity here, of his own accord, to rescue us. And judging from what he's done here, there are more human beings than ourselves who owe him a vote of thanks. But confidentially, honey, the lad's a little bit

interested in you, and I can't say that I disapprove . . ."

Elaine looked at Huston.

"I knew that," she said. "I'd never have taken that cup of coffee that night otherwise."

Gorrity broke in.

"This isn't exactly the place for romance," he said. "We've got work to do. We've got some files to unearth which will clear Mr. Hardwicke of the Poker Flats deal . . . you wouldn't want your father-in-law to be a jailbird, would you, Huston?"

McClintock cut in.

"Wonder how long we'll have to wait to get that reward, now that everybody in the Arkway fortune is dead? Sometimes takes years for such a thing to go

through the courts. The chief'll be mad; he'll want his cut right away."

Huston grinned.

"I'd enjoy seeing him wait, but I don't think he'll have to. You see Mac, the whole works belongs to Mr. Hardwicke now, as the only remaining member of the original firm."

"Yes," said Hardwicke, "and I think I've got an opening for a couple of very good detectives to work for me. Better than directing traffic, isn't it, McClintock?"

"Yeah," said McClintock, "And I don't think I'd like to watch that bank wall any more, even if the door is closed for good. Somehow, I don't trust those technicians. They were too smart!"

THE END

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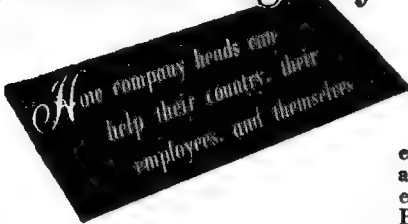
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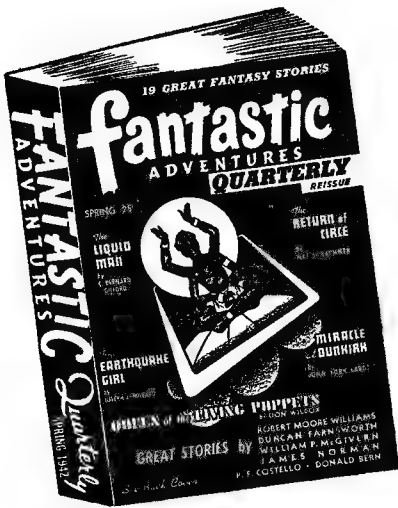
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GAS ATTACK!

By ELLIS WHITE

Will the desperate dictators turn to that war horror, poison gas? Here are some fantastic facts about gas

IN THE holocaust of flame and fury and misery that today envelopes the greater part of this so-called civilized world of ours, we read constantly of *blitzkrieg* warfare, bombings of civilian populations, and the hidden threat of mysterious devastations usually labeled "secret weapons."

But out of the mountains of misery formed by the daily news reports through press and radio in this particular war we hear nothing of one of the first world war's most terrifying instruments of death—poison gas.

As far as can be ascertained at the time of this writing, there has been no use of poison gas in this second world war. And even if gaseous death has been spewed secretly in very minor troop engagements(and now and then unsubstantiated rumors declare as much), the threat of poison gas has yet to accompany aerial bombardment of civilian populations. And this fact in spite of fearful public expectations of its widespread use at the outbreak of present hostilities.

Why has poison gas not yet been used?

Some usually reliable correspondents and news commentators speaking on this subject declare that neither Germany nor the Allies have resorted to poison gas as yet because of a mutual dread of hideous counter gas attacks in reprisal. They intimate that the horrors of such warfare repel even Englishmen who are fighting for their very

lives and Germans who are mad for conquest. And so—the commentators sum it up—both sides in the conflict have adopted a "not until you do" attitude toward the use of poison gas.

But this is merely theorizing—incorrectly.

The cold scientific facts of the matter are that both Germany and England would both have used poison gas long ago in this war had there been any advantage to it.

But poison gas in modern warfare, even against civilian populations, is practically outdated. It is almost worthless. It can accomplish little or nothing.

Within the last ten years there have been no new discoveries of poison gases of any real importance. Chemical warfare today is less effective than it was during the first world war. These are facts:

Mustard gas—the worst possible form of chemical warfare—has not been surpassed by anything deadlier. And mustard gas against the modern chemical defenses adopted to thwart it, is far less to be feared today than it was in 1918.

Gas masks of today are vastly superior to those made during the first world war. There is no gas today that will penetrate the active charcoal masks now in use. They absorb the molecules of heavy vapors and hold back the lighter molecules almost in-

(Continued on page 142)

READER'S PAGE

BLANKITY-BLANK

Sirs:

There are two reasons why I'm writing this letter about the January issue.

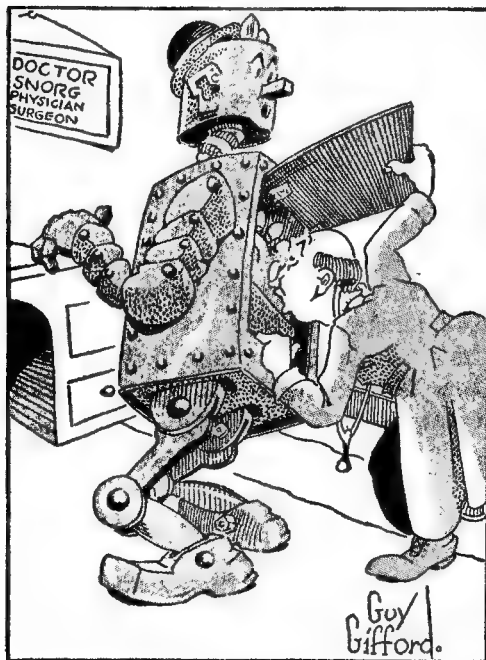
1. The cover—*undoubtedly* the best cover I've ever seen on your mag. Superb! Marvelous! *Magnifique!*
2. Don Wilcox's "Rainbow Of Death." Wow! Why the blankity-blank don't you keep up stories like this? If you did, your mag would rise to undreamed of fame. *What a story!*

The rest of the stories I rate thus:

2. V Is For Vengeance
3. The Contract Of Carson Carruthers
4. Spook For Yourself
5. The Daughter Of Genghis Khan
6. The House Of Fire

About the best inside illustration was for "V Is For Vengeance."

Lionel Batty, Jr.,
1485 N. Morningside Dr. N.E.,
Atlanta, Ga.



"Say 'Ah!'"

Such enthusiasm! Tsk, tsk, Mr. Batty. But thanks anyway. We know you mean it. And we'll be waiting for more letters from you, because really, you "ain't seen nothin' yet!"—Ed.

A DECLARATION

Sirs:

The Futurian Society of New York declares its unswerving sympathy and loyalty to the great struggle being carried on by four-fifths of the population of the Earth, headed by the alliance of the United States, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and China, against the barbarian thrust of the Nazi-Fascist-Japanese Axis. It makes this declaration in the firm conviction that the further progress of science and civilization, upon which the visions and dreams of science and fantasy fiction are mainly based, is dependent entirely upon an Allied victory. The shape of the future is being decided on the battlefield of the present. Science fiction readers, writers, and enthusiasts have no other possible choice but to do all in their power to aid and speed the triumph of civilization over fascism. To this end, the Futurian Society appeals to all other science fiction and fantasy clubs, publications, and readers to issue similar declarations and to do all in their power to help the United States to absolute victory.

John B. Michel, Director,
Futurian Society,
New York.

DUCK, MR. LESSER!

Sirs:

I just can't help writing a few lines about Milt Lesser who wrote you in the January issue. Who does he think he is? No one asked him to read our book. But they say it takes all kinds to make a world.

I am a widow, 30, with two sons 7 and 9 and I make it a practice to read F. A. every month to them. They love it, and so do I, and if I were the editor I would tell Mr. Lesser to go jump in the lake. I can imagine what he looks like. If you publish this letter, just one word to him: "Mr. Lesser, I'd advise you to read Good Housekeeping. F. A. is way beyond your intelligence and ability to cope with. I think it's a swell mag and has given me plenty of comfort. No matter if it does sound wishy-washy or love and kisses. I hope you will always publish the same

said stories forever. Lots of good luck. I am a woman, and I love to see our cover girl plenty nude.

Marie Sousa,
954 S. State Street,
Syracuse, N. Y.

Well, Mr. Lesser, you asked for it. And we have the ladies right squarely behind us. In fact, we've got a lot of them to defend us. F. A. is quite a favorite with the feminine reading public.

And thanks, much Mrs. Sousa, for all you said about us. We hope those two sons of yours grow up to be sons we can both be proud of—we in the capacity of a sort of fatherly interest in their entertainment.—Ed.

ENJOYED!

Sirs:

We have read and enjoyed FANTASTIC ADVENTURES for the past year, and think your magazine is superb!!!!

We were particularly thrilled with John York Cabot's "The Daughter Of Genghis Khan" and "Eight Who Came Back."

"Introducing The Author" and "The Editor's Notebook" are our favorite features.

Hats off to your excellent January cover! We think it's one of your best, by far!!

Will you please mention our names saying we desire to correspond with either sex from age nineteen to twenty-two, from all parts of the world? We will answer all letters. Our hobbies are swimming, horseback riding, ice-skating, and collecting snapshots.

Betty Ruth Brown,
517 East Seventeenth No. 1,
Indianapolis, Indiana.

Wynne Whitney,
2217 College Avenue No. 1,
Indianapolis, Indiana.

Your editor almost feels sorry that he's an octogenarian, or he might try to squeeze into that age limit himself—if it wasn't such a tight squeeze. But we certainly are glad to know you like FANTASTIC ADVENTURES. We have many thousands of women readers.—Ed.

SAY, WEREN'T WE JUST TALKING ABOUT YOU, MR. LESSER?

Sirs:

Explanations are in order, I believe. After you printed that letter of mine in January which called you everything under and over the sun that the devil stands for, you stated that you'd like to know why I disliked the artists and most of the stories. Ok, so I'll tell you.

First, the art. Rod Ruth is just plainly terrible, no help for that. Jackson is usually in the same boat, but in the January issue his pictures for Williams' novelet were good, the best in the

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Personal

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issue. Fuqua, in my opinion, is commonplace and has no originality in his work. Use Paul on the inside, as you did years ago. And get Krupa to stay away from the slicks just long enough to do a good pic a month. McCauley is all right on the covers.

Now the stories. The main reason, I guess, is the lack of FANTASY in them. Most of them are just adventures with the fantastic left out. Supernatural stories should be left to weird magazines.

I might as well compliment you on the January issue because it was a very marked improvement over the former ones. Not One Single Story

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Name.....

Present Position.....

Address.....



WAS REALLY BAD!!! So I take back most of the harsh words I used.

The best story in January was, of course, "House of Fire." Robert Moore Williams is not a genius when he does a ghost story; he is, though, when he produces a novelet like this.

And it really was the first good story since Circe. Wilcox comes second with his "Rainbow of Death." To say it is as good as the stone doll story last January is wrong. It is better. I thoroughly hated "Secret of The Stone Doll." Third, "Spook For Yourself" by David Wright O'Brien. Because of the supernatural stuff I should have stuck this down last, but the light manner of presentation saved it. "The Daughter of Genghis Khan" is an example of what I complained about. Nicely written adventure, but hardly any of the real fantastic.

Milt Lesser,
2302 Ave. O.,
Brooklyn, N. Y.

P. S. The Special Issue of *Amazing Stories* was even better!

It is obvious from your letter that you like your fantasy wild and woolly, and the light fantasy passes you by. Well, we will naturally have stories of both types, and we hope the heavy ones please you. Thanks for your explanatory letter.—Ed.

A HARD DAY'S WORK

Sirs:

I have just finished reading the January issue of *FANTASTIC ADVENTURES*. Wow! How did you do it? An issue without a single bad story. It took about two hours to choose the best story, two more to choose the second, and so on. All in all it took me a day to rate the stories.

For the first place I choose Cabot's "The Daughter of Genghis Khan." A thoroughly interesting story from beginning to end. For Cabot's first novel I think you've got a great author. A good movie could be based on this story.

Your best interior decorator, oops, sorry, artist, is Robert Fuqua. Say, how do you pronounce his name? He is careful with details. We the fans, appreciate that.

Charles Nutt,
3025 Ainslie Street,
Chicago, Illinois.

Robert Fuqua pronounces his name few-qwah.
—Ed.

CONTROVERSIAL—BUT

Sirs:

I felt compelled by the Jan. 1942 issue to make some comment. This is unusual, for this reason. I usually read it from cover to cover and proceed to give vent to grunts and grimaces of the "mouse-filled-cat" variety. This time, however, I found that each story, with the exception of the humorous O'Brien and McGivern bits, aroused the controversial in me! I can neither just shout "ah-h!"

nor mutter "uh-h." I have to argue.

Cabot's "Daughter" was perfect. But! The but means that I can't reconcile its place in FANTASTIC. There are several publications on the market devoted to weird and strange stories such as this one. Its inclusion seems a sharp veering away from the usual Fantastic policy. Whether for better or worse, I haven't yet decided.

As for "Rainbow of Death," I approve of the type. I liked the plot very much. I liked the characters, but. Somehow, somewhere, Wilcox seems to have "missed the boat" on this one! I think perhaps it was the clash of plot and style. It just isn't the type of story that Wilcox does his best in.

The "V" story was also good. But. The but in this was that it struck me as being illogical, though, I suppose, freakishly possible. An arch is a large but easily destructible structure. Yet, this one survived, though the entire city of Gorla was ruined, and then after being transported, and again erected, produced the results for which it was intended. In spite of the fact that it was constructed to react to the vibrations of hoofs and chariots, rather than heavy-duty motors. But perhaps that isn't important. I'm no engineer.

Other than that, the art was good, as were the departments, except the reader's page which was too short.

And now in closing, a rather backhanded compliment. Of all the mags I read, and I manage to acquire most of them, good and bad, yours is the only one that my husband will condescend to read!!!

Dolores Lapi,
42-47th Street,
Weehawken, N. J.

Once in a while we depart from "policy," because variety is certainly a good thing. But really, we haven't a policy at all. We just publish stories that would seem to be of interest to our readers.

Thus, if we run a ghost story, it just happens that ghosts are fantasy, imagination, and this particular ghost story was exceptionally good. So we buy it.

Cabot writes a story about the daughter of Genghis Khan, and she exorcises dragons, which is weird, but it's a good story, so we buy it. And if dragons out of flaming urns aren't fantastic, then we need a dictionary.

All of which will serve to show you that we aim to give you the whole wide range of fantasy, with no particular kind barred. In this way, we stand a good chance of pleasing all of you some of the time, at least.

Your husband is a discerning man!—Ed.

SHAME! SHAME!

Sirs:

My first beef is about your amazing lack of serials. What's wrong, huh? Can't you keep a writer long enough to write a serial?

Shame! Shame!

Beef number two. I always thought that the purpose of a magazine was to have its readers enjoy the stories inside. Right?

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Well, then why, I ask you, why do you put such alluringly beautiful girls on the covers? I for one find it very hard to concentrate on the stories in your mag with that Mac Girl sitting so demurely on the front cover. Sigh!

The only really excellent feature that appeals to my childish mind is the cartoons scattered throughout your mag. By all means, let's have more of them. You might even put out a special edition with nothing but jokes and cartoons in it. Good idea, huh?

The Brain,
c/o Lyra II.

Serials? Wassamatter with the Frank Patton opus, "Doorway To Hell"? Concluding instalment is in this issue. Sure our writers stick long enough to write serials. Wilcox has done a serial for our companion magazine, Amazing Stories, which is running now, first instalment. Stanton A. Coblenz has one on our desk right this minute. Nelson S. Bond has finished 50,000 words of a very fine serial. David V. Reed is whipping up the last chapters of a similar length. Serials? Heck yes, we got 'em. And as for the Mac Girl, if you can't keep your mind off her, why try? That's what we put her there for, for you to look at!—Ed.

A TWO-TIMER

Sirs:

I grabbed the first things I could lay my hands on to write to you. This is the second time I've ever written to FA so I've got plenty of atomic exhaust to let out.

First blast is that your stories are getting on the unknown side. Keep it scientific.

Second blast, how about getting Paul back?

Third-fourth-fifth blasts, how about getting back to the large size magazine.

I think I had better turn on a joy ray now. Two comets and a star for cartoons. They rocket a feller into good humor. So I say, keep them. Three stars and a nebula for your Romance of The Elements. Sure is interesting to find out about the elements. Boy, my gravity plates lift me up when I read your articles. In fact, I think all your scientific articles deserve acclaim.

Well ray my ears off if I haven't said something good about FA. I started to write intending to blast you from here to Vega, but here I am giving compliments. Well, I guess there's some good in everything.

Maybe next time I write I'll be able to say I intended compliments.

Rubin Silver,
78 Maryland Street,
Springfield, Mass.

Fantastic Adventures is rather proud of the fact that our stories are definitely different than others, even if they are "unknown" as you term them. And we are trying not to make them scientific, because our companion magazine, Amazing Stories carries that type story.

We'll dedicate silver "romance" to you, Ag.—Ed.

A PRODIGAL DAUGHTER

Sirs:

I read your December issue of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES and since it was my first in almost a year, needless to say I found it quite changed. One thing which impressed me most was the definite trend away from the deep science and toward fantasy with an underlying basis of science fiction.

Your illustrations too are all up to par, but I'm still partial to Krupa, Fuqua, and most of all those Mac Girls. Maybe I'm just old-fashioned!

"Death Plays A Game" was sensational to say the least, but my spine is still tingling from "Mr. Eee Conducts A Tour." That boy Wilcox has really got something there. The rest of the stories were up to your usual standard.

I know that times have changed, but I would still welcome a yarn by Nelson S. Bond or Eando Binder if you could slip one in sometime.

Commending you on your fine work, I remain yours for science fiction.

Corlene Bernald,
4352 San Carlos,
Dallas, Texas.

Well, now that you've returned, Corlene, don't stray away again. We're planning to kill the fatted calf for you every month. For instance, Nelson S. Bond has no less than four stories in the house now, and they will appear in both this magazine and in Amazing Stories.

Eando Binder has a Little People story under construction, and he appears in the April issue of AMAZING STORIES (on sale February 10) with an Adam Link novel that's a peach.

The author of "Death Plays A Game" has his best work to date coming up, and no doubt you'll be glad to note that he appears in the March Amazing Stories with "The Planet of Ghosts" which is as sensational, we think, as the above-mentioned story. Why not pick it up right now and read it? It's really a very unusual story.

Your analysis of the change we have undergone in a year is interesting, and very satisfying to us. It means that we really did succeed in giving FA the atmosphere and treatment we desired, and naturally we desired it because you readers did. Your letter was very constructive and very intelligently written.—Ed.

DOORWAY TO HEAVEN!

Sirs:

I have just this minute gotten your new February issue, and have finished the first instalment of "Doorway to Hell." You mean "Doorway to Heaven!" That story has me all atingle yet. The suspense is terrible. I wish now I hadn't read it, but waited for the March issue. What is behind the door? My God, man, how can you do this to us?

Frankly, though, and no pun intended, I don't think Patton can keep up that pace. The second instalment of this serial is bound to be a let-down. The sheer suspense of the first part is terrific, but it won't be there in the second

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part. However, I'm still waiting with my tongue hanging out.

While we're at it, a word of praise to Fuqua for the magnificent conception of hell on the cover. Naturally, the Mac Girl is as beautiful as ever, but we rather wish she'd been further inside; that orange gown would have looked swell going up in smoke!

I haven't read the rest of the stories yet, but they look good. Glad to see Henry Horn back again. He's a clever character. Mr. Swain will do well to keep up with him.

Vampires, enchantresses, living manikins, ghosts, devils, harpies,—say, you are going super-naturally fantastic with a vengeance, aren't you? But you can't displease me with that policy. It's right down my alley.

Edwin Benkowski,
1786 S. 18th Street,
Milwaukee Wisconsin.

Glad to know you like the type of stories we are presenting. We'll certainly have everything on the calendar.—Ed.

COSTELLO HAS HIM GASPING

Sirs:

I've just finished the last story in the February issue of **FANTASTIC ADVENTURES**, and I don't mean the last story in the book. I read P. F. Costello's story "The Lady And The Vampire" last because it looked least interesting. Vampires are rather hackneyed, and I rather shuddered at reading another, but I have a lot of time for reading, so I read it anyway. And he (the author, not the vampire) has me gasping. What a thoroughly delightful yarn! I never suspected a vampire story could ever be so cleverly treated in a modern manner. I was figuratively chuckling in my beard when the vampire discovered his girl-friend ate garlic!

Please tell Costello to keep up this kind of writing. He'll beat those three worthies, Wilcox, O'Brien, and McGivern all hollow, if he does!

The rest of the issue was splendid. You have now put out two issues in a row which knocked me for a loop. Great stuff, Mr. Editor. Great stuff!

The art work was good, but an otherwise excellent story was ruined by the illustration for "Doorway to Hell." I thought there were many scenes that would have made better illustrations, although perhaps they might have given something away. Anyway, tell Fuqua to do a little better on the interior. His covers are grand.

Jep Powell's follow-up article on "Man, An Unnecessary Evil" was quite good. That man knows how to make a prosaic subject tickle the imagination. His stories, however, aren't so good.

Arnold Kleemeyer,
Wichita Falls, Kan.

Costello tells us that he has several more parodies on vampires and things in mind. We have already hinted that he write them up.—Ed.

DISGUSTING!

Sirs:

I have been a science fiction fan for quite a number of years, but this is the first time I have deemed it necessary to write in to any magazine. I have a complaint to make and I'm willing to bet more than half of the readers of your magazine will side with me. Why in the world do you print those disgusting Mac girl covers? I'm afraid to carry your magazine around with me. People look at me and say, "Aha, so that's the kind of a guy he is."

Because a few hypocrites write in asking you to keep on printing them because they appreciate the art on the covers? Some art! If they like that type of stuff, why don't they buy magazines that feature this so-called art? Mind you, I have nothing against McCauley. He's a fine artist, when he doesn't paint that kind of junk.

Those covers are definitely LOUSAY. In fact, they STINK. Stop printing them! They make a swell magazine look cheap.

Harry Schuster,
1733-5 Fulton Ave.,
Bronx, N. Y.

Well, what about it? Let's have it out. You readers who like the girl, write in. You readers who don't, do the same. We'll count ballots and decide what is to be done. Mac Girl, or no Mac Girl?

But, Harry, we think you're sticking your neck out.

Why should people say you are "that kind of a guy"? What kind of a guy? Sexy? Well, the Mac Girl has a lot of the old appeal, we'll admit, but certainly not suggestive.

Let the ballots fly.—Ed.

MADE HIM THINK

Sirs:

I have just read Robert Moore Williams' short story "Fate And The Fly," and I am just a little bit bewildered. Williams sure can pack a lot of unsaid things into a yarn. It made me think. But the more I think about it, the more I begin to wonder if FANTASTIC ADVENTURES is as fantastic as one might believe?

I have often wondered at the strange workings of Fate, and whether or not there was some intelligence behind it all. I think all of us have had things happen to us that seemed just a little more than accidental.

Give my congratulations to Williams for a "different" little yarn. I like stories of this kind once in a while.

Willis Whitney,
78 Court Street,
New Orleans, La.

That's exactly what your editor thought when he read Williams' story, Mr. Whitney. It was not essentially a fantastic adventure, but it was a type of fantasy that strikes through all our lives, and makes the unreal seem very real to us at times. And besides, we think the author did a nice job of writing.—Ed.

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THE WAR

Sirs:

I suppose that the war will have its effect on "our" magazine too, but I hope it will not be a bad effect. We really need this type of "escape" literature now, more than ever.

But I want to warn you against becoming too preponderantly "warlike" in your selection of stories. We still want fantasy fiction, and we don't want all the stories to be war-fantasy, although a few good ones wouldn't hurt. Remember the phantom bowmen of Mons?

With a prayer for the continued production of sufficient quantities of pulp paper, and the draft exemption of our writers!

Gaylord Reinold,
Box 236,
South Bend, Indiana.

No need to worry, Mr. Reinold. We'll keep right on publishing your favorite stories, by your favorite authors.—Ed.

GAS ATTACK!

(Continued from page 133)

definitely. Mustard gas, chlorine gas, and phosgene gas—none of these are of any effect against a modern gas mask.

It has been proven that in the last world war peasants were able to protect themselves from even the deadly mustard gas by merely closing the doors and windows of their cottages until the attack was over. And these were unfortunates who didn't even possess masks.

And in addition to superior gas defense in the form of masks, there are now decontamination squads, chemically equipped, who serve competently to eliminate the last deadly fumes of gases that might linger after aerial gas attacks. So even the element of chance in encountering gas pockets long after the raid is over is now definitely narrowed down to nothing. There is no chink in the armor of gas attack defense.

There have been incredible whisperings—as far back as six and eight years ago—that toxic liquid gas, called a

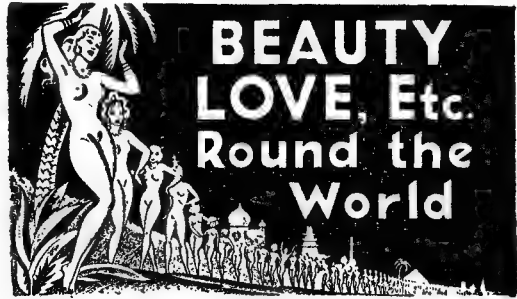
"Dew Of Death" would serve as modern war's most deadly weapon and succeed in wiping out entire metropolitan populations. We've all heard of something similar to this.

But such an attack is also impossible against any city even remotely protected with an air defense. Chemical experts of the very highest rank have all agreed that toxic liquids have to be sprayed at an exceptionally low altitude, approximately 250 feet, to have any effect at all. There have been no enemy planes for example, that have dropped that low over London since the declaration of this second world war. The R.A.F. sees that they stay many, many times higher, and if they do get that low, it's while dropping in flames.

People point out that certain gases can wipe out staggering numbers of people. This is true. But give them modern gas masks and an inkling that they are about to be attacked, and the gas bombing armadas might as well turn back and go home. The people of the British Isles and of Europe have all the protection necessary to thumb their noses at gas.

Lastly, the production of poison gas is exceptionally dangerous and costly in life to carry out. The number of casualties occurring to those occupied in the manufacture of poison gas during the last world war was staggering, reaching proportions approaching the number of soldier casualties resulting from it.

So put on your mask. Don't let anybody worry you about that time-worn devil gas. Highly ineffective, dangerous to produce, costly to use, gas is not likely to be brought forth on any large scale in this modern war. If there were an advantage to it, Germany would scarcely hesitate using it any more than she hesitated in beginning civilian bombings.



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The Editor's Notebook

A CONFIDENTIAL CHAT WITH THE EDITOR

(Concluded from page 6)

MAY we take this opportunity to do you a favor? Well, the March issue of *Amazing Stories*, now on sale, contains the first instalment of Don Wilcox's greatest work, a full-length novel called "Disciples of Destiny." 60,000 words of the finest science fiction you've ever read. And in a way, it's fantasy too, because it has some of the elements of a true fantasy in its make-up. It is featured by a cover from your favorite cover artist, Robert Fuqua, in one of his most unusual paintings. Better hike out and pick up a copy. It's a special giant issue too!

REMEMBER that invitation, still standing, to all you readers who happen in on Chicago? We'd like to have you drop up and see us in our new offices at 540 N. Michigan Ave. Especially you fans who are doing such good work recently in forming a national organization with real sock behind it. According to Doc Smith, author of the famous Skylark stories, great things are happening. Well, we'll be glad to pass on the information—and personally, if you drop in.

OUR recently instituted policy of being gabby about treats in coming issues has proven so popular that we'll have to spill a few more beans this month.

MALCOLM SMITH, a cover artist new to *Fantastic Adventures*, will make his bow in the April issue with a cover which served as the inspiration for "Dwellers of the Deep" by Don Wilcox. We can say quite definitely that you'll like both the artist and the author. They make quite a fascinating team.

THEN there's the lovable little Martian detective, Oscar, coming back with a story of the far north, and although it was written more than six months ago, tells of a Jap invasion of America. What little Oscar does about it makes quite a yarn!

AND we know none of you have forgotten Robert Bloch. He's quite a guy, and whenever a manuscript comes in from him, we sit back and begin to chuckle, because we know what to expect. Need we say more? You know what we mean.

YOUR editor, at the writing, is anticipating a trip to New York, where we will visit David V. Reed, author of "Death Plays a Game" in our December issue. We'll also be seeing Eando Binder, Manly Wade Wellman, and quite a few other of your favorites. Never can tell what will come of it.

Rap

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CORRESPONDENCE CORNER

Stanley D. Werbin, 589 Blake Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y., is very anxious to correspond with boys and girls in the U. S. and other countries. He is 14 years old and very interested in science and science-fiction. . . N. Nathanson, 1549 St. Nicholas Ave., New York, N. Y., would like to obtain the copies of AMAZING STORIES in which the Buck Rogers' stories appeared. They were published under the titles of "Armageddon" and "The Airlords of Hans." . . Joe Moen, R. I., Box 311, Mt. Vernon, Washington, desires girl pen pals from Mt. Vernon or near-by. . . Tom Ludowitz, 2310 Virginia, Everett, Wash., has all the books by Burroughs—list free. Be sure to state whether Tarzan books are wanted or not. . . Selma Green, 17 S. Dover Ave., Atlantic City, N. J., is interested in forming a STF club and would like fans to contact her. She would also like to get in touch with Don Marvin, Fruita, Colo., if his club is still open for membership. . . Sylvester Brown, Jr., 7 Arlington St., Cambridge, Mass., would like to buy back issues of science-fiction mags in good condition. . . John M. Cunningham, 2050 Gilbert St., Beaumont, Texas, desires correspondents interested in the furtherment and development of a united Fandom. . . William McNaught, Box 36, Gales Ferry, Conn., wants to obtain issues containing Dr. E. E. Smith's "Skylark 111." He is willing to buy or trade for them—is also interested in hearing from anyone with old S-F magazines for sale. . . Joe Hensley, 411 South Fess Street, Bloomington, Ind., is interested in forming a science fiction club called the Scion Club of Indiana. Those interested in joining write to him. He would also like to buy quarterlies and annuals of AMAZING STORIES. . . Max Belz, Waldoboro, Me., has AMAZING and other sciencefictions to dispose of and he will take on any good chess player in correspondence chess. . . LaVerne Carlson, 210 Grove Street, Knoxville, Ill., has around 200 back issues of AMAZING and other science and weird fiction mags to trade or sell. . . Mrs. Dolores Lapi, 42 47th Street, Weehawken, N. J., can offer the following to collectors: (1) A limited number of copies of Weinbaum's classic, brand new, at \$1.25 each. (2) A complete set of Edgar Rice Burrough's works. List sent on request. (4) Vol. 1, No. 1, of AMAZING STORIES and also of other mags. (5) She can undertake to procure any other copies, new or used, of books or magazines needed by fans.

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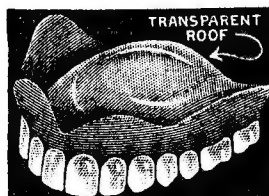
ELSIE BOLAND OF NORTON, KANSAS,

writes: "Enclosed find two pictures. One shows how I looked before I got my teeth; the other one afterwards. Your teeth are certainly beautiful."



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